



**2025/26 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

May - July 2026

*(Sittings 35 - 40 of the 2025/26 Session)
(pages 2851- 3396 and Index)*

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

Disclaimer: The electronic version of the *Official Hansard Report* is for informational purposes only. The printed version remains the official record.

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
15 MAY 2026
10:05 AM**

Sitting Number 35 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Just put the bar across.
Thank you.
Good morning, Members. The prayer has been given. The House is now in session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Good morning.

An Hon. Member: Welcome back.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Good morning, Members. Welcome back after a break from the Chambers. I am sure everyone is eager to get on with business today.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Before we start, I would just like to acknowledge in the Gallery the visiting sorority, the Del-tas are visiting with us today. I believe this is the second year in a row . . . they were . . . it was last year, was it? Yes.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: So, we welcome you today and look forward to you at least finding this morning's session interesting and we can chat after the morning session is done. [We] look forward to that.

We will start this morning with the confirmation of minutes.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 27 March 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from the sitting of the 27th of March have been circulated. Are there any amendments required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

[Minutes of 27 March 2026 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: I have received two acknowledgements this morning [one] from the Minister of Health, Minister Wilson, and [one] from MP Curtis Dickinson that they will be absent today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There are three such papers this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Premier.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

**INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION (TAX
INFORMATION EXCHANGE AGREEMENTS)
COMMON REPORTING STANDARD
AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026**

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, the International Cooperation (Tax Information Exchange Agreements) Common Reporting Standard Amendment Regulations 2026, as made

by the Minister of Finance, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 12 of the International Cooperation (Tax Information Exchange Agreements) Act 2005.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second paper this morning is in the name of the Minister of Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sport.

Minister.

MOTOR TAXI (TAXI DESPATCHING SERVICE) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly, the Motor Taxi (Taxi Despatching Service) Amendment Regulations 2026, as made by the Minister responsible for transport in exercise of the power conferred by section 37A of the Motor Car Act 1951.

The Speaker: And there's a second statement . . . paper by, from yourself—

MOTOR CAR (RIDESHARING) REGULATIONS 2026

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House, the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Regulations 2026, as made by the Minister responsible for transport in exercise of the power conferred by sections 37 and 102 of the Motor Car Act 1951.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

And that brings us to a close of the papers and communications today.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We will now move on to the Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers, and they are pretty lengthy this morning. We have 10 Statements this morning.

The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement?

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

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED PROCESS FOR

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this Honourable House that the Government of Bermuda has formally commenced consultation on the proposed process for constitutional reform. Nearly 60 years have passed since the introduction of the Bermuda Constitution Order 1968, and it has been more than two decades since substantive reforms were last achieved.

Mr. Speaker, the first Progressive Labour Party Government cemented the electoral process under which we now operate, enshrining *one man or woman one vote, each vote of equal value* into our Constitution. That is this Government's legacy of fairness and democracy, achieved under the leadership of the former Honourable Member Dame Jennifer Smith and the late former Honourable Member and Attorney General, Dame Lois Browne-Evans.

Mr. Speaker, since that time, Bermuda and the world have changed socially, legally, and technologically. The time has therefore come to consider constitutional modernisation in a serious, structured, and inclusive way. Honourable Members will recall that the Speech from the Throne in March 2025, signalled the commencement of this process and in so doing, confirmed that: "Electoral and Constitutional reforms should mirror the times in which we live, and the strength of systems is in their ability to adjust to meet the demands of the times."

Mr. Speaker, I will be clear from the outset. This process of modernisation will be the result of careful, considered change to a constitutional framework that has served Bermuda for almost six decades. Changes will not be made without scrutiny by this Honourable House, meaningful participation by the people of Bermuda, and ultimately the agreement of the Government of the United Kingdom.

Mr. Speaker, in advance of my remarks today, I have written to the Leader of the Opposition, the Chief Justice, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Assembly, and other relevant heads to notify them of the commencement of this consultation and to provide the draft recommendations for their consideration. Each has been invited to provide feedback, the intent of which is to improve and finalise Bermuda's map to an improved constitutional framework.

The draft recommendations now before stakeholders are the product of significant research, analysis, and engagement. That work included an examination of Bermuda's constitutional history and comparative constitutional practice across other British Overseas Territories and the Commonwealth nations of the Caribbean. It also reflects input from Government House, the Opposition, the Attorney General and Minister of Justice, the Speaker of the House, the President of the Senate, the Chief Justice, the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Clerk to the Legislature, and other

senior constitutional appointees, technical officers, and contributors. These efforts have culminated in the *Draft Recommendations for a Bermuda-Led Constitutional Reform Process*, which set out a proposed five-phase pathway for constitutional reform.

As Bermuda is a British Overseas Territory, the United Kingdom's consent is required for constitutional reform. The United Kingdom has indicated that Bermuda may design and carry out its own process, provided that the process is cross-party, inclusive, transparent, proportionate, and consultative. The proposed process has been designed to meet those requirements, reflecting this Government's commitment to full public participation and transparency in consultation and process.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is firmly committed to ensuring that constitutional reform is conducted in a measured and inclusive manner ensuring that its legitimacy is not an afterthought, but the foundation upon which the entire process has been designed. As a result, the five proposed phases are:

- Phase 1 - Process Design and Agreement: Gathering informed feedback on the proposed process, improving the draft, securing broad, bipartisan agreement, and formally initiating the process following the approval of the United Kingdom.

- Phase 2 - Implementation Preparation: Establishing the legal framework and organisational structures to deliver the process, including a Constitutional Reform Commission and an Executive Steering Committee.

- Phase 3 - Awareness, Education and Engagement: Providing civic education, plain language information, and opportunities for community submissions on constitutional priorities.

- Phase 4 - Constitutional Conference and Drafting: Convening a locally designed and led constitutional conference to deliberate on priorities and develop draft recommendations for constitutional amendments.

- Phase 5 - Finalisation, Approval and Ratification: Securing local approval, submitting recommendations to the United Kingdom, undertaking bilateral discussions, and ratifying agreed amendments by an Order in Council.

Mr. Speaker, we are now at the beginning of Phase 1. By virtue of their constitutional roles and responsibilities, the current consultation is directed at the leaders and stewards of the three branches of Government to gather their views on the process. The Bermuda Bar Council has also been invited to participate as a critical stakeholder with relevant legal expertise.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to underline the central role proposed for the Legislature in the constitutional reform process. Members of the Legislature are invited to scrutinise the draft process, and in time consider enabling legislation, debate future reform proposals, and evidence their support before recommendations are advanced to the United Kingdom. The

participation of both Houses on behalf of those people we represent is critical for progressing reform.

Mr. Speaker, public participation is also essential. Following agreement on the process the people of Bermuda will be invited to help shape the reform agenda enabled through public education, plain-language information, submissions, community dialogue, deliberation, and fulsome consultation on developed proposals. The purpose is to ensure that participation is meaningful, accessible, informed, and includes a cross-section of Bermudian society.

Mr. Speaker, the mention of constitutional reform can understandably give rise to concern that intended change of this nature is a pretext for something larger, something more fundamental, that has not been put to the people. Let me be clear: What we are embarking upon is a process of modernisation, the kind of careful, considered maintenance that any living constitutional document requires after six decades.

I would note that this is not a process Bermuda is undertaking alone. The United Kingdom has itself committed, most recently at the 2025 Joint Ministerial Council, to engage closely and proactively with each Overseas Territory whose democratic will is to revise its Constitution. That commitment reflects a shared understanding that modernisation of this kind is both reasonable and overdue.

The process as proposed will be transparent, and any proposed changes will be considered and advanced following consultation with the people of Bermuda and the approval of the Legislature. As is the case with each British Overseas Territory, final approval rests with the Government of the United Kingdom.

I wish to thank those who contributed to the development of the draft recommendations, including the Attorney General's Chambers, the Cabinet Office, the London Office, the Legislature, and the many individuals, including retirees, who gave their time and expertise to inform this work.

Mr. Speaker, I will ensure that this Honourable House and the public are kept informed of the progress and outcome of the consultation, and I look forward to the feedback it will generate in support of our shared goal of a better Constitution for Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Members, the second Statement this morning is also in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to proceed with your second Statement?

Hon. E. David Burt: With pleasure, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

BERMUDA'S FISCAL PROGRESS, INDEPENDENT RATING AGENCIES CONFIRM

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to update this Honourable House on the latest independent assessments from international credit rating agencies. These rating agencies confirm Bermuda's improving fiscal position and strengthening economy, boosting investor confidence, which is an important factor in continued business growth and investment.

Mr. Speaker, in the space of two weeks three leading credit rating agencies have completed their latest reviews of Bermuda's creditworthiness. On April 29, 2026, Kroll Bond Rating Agency (KBRA) affirmed Bermuda's long-term issuer ratings at A+, our short-term ratings at K1+, and improved our long-term outlook from Stable to Positive.

Mr. Speaker, KBRA said the action of revising Bermuda's outlook from Stable to Positive reflects the "constructive structural shift" of Bermuda's public finances driven by the corporate income tax. KBRA noted that higher revenues will facilitate debt reduction and create room for further payroll and other tax relief that benefits the wider economy.

The agency also pointed to Bermuda's "world-class" international business services sector, our role as a hub for emerging financial industries, and our strong institutions and regulatory environment as factors that position the Island for "continued prosperity."

On May 4, 2026, S&P Global ratings affirmed our A+ long-term, and A1 short-term ratings and improved Bermuda's outlook from Stable to Positive. Mr. Speaker, in their report, S&P Global said it expects Bermuda's finances "to continue to strengthen," noting Bermuda's "effective and predictable" policymaking, and the stability of our key industries. They also advised that the new corporate income tax would allow the Government "to fully repay an upcoming debt maturity in January 2027," helping to return Bermuda to a net general government creditor position.

Mr. Speaker, in practical terms, this places Bermuda in a stronger financial position to meet its obligations while creating greater capacity to invest in the priorities that support Bermudians and their future.

Mr. Speaker, on May 5, 2026, Moody's ratings upgraded, Bermuda's long-term issuer rating from A2 to A1, with a Stable outlook.

Mr. Speaker, Moody's decision is particularly significant. Moody's is one of the most respected names in sovereign credit analysis and is a direct upgrade of Bermuda's sovereign credit rating, which was downgraded in 2016 from A1 to A2.

An Hon. Member: I remember that.

Hon. E. David Burt: This places our Island more firmly in the upper tier of investment-grade jurisdictions.

Moody's stated that the upgrade reflects the "improvement in fiscal strength" that is expected to continue in the coming years. The agency also noted the introduction of corporate income tax represents a "structural increase in government revenue," which it

expects will lead to (and I quote) "a sustained track record of fiscal surpluses, continued improvement in debt affordability and a faster and durable reduction" in Bermuda's debt burden.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is one additional point that I believe is essential to note from page 1 of Moody's report. The rating agency stated, "Even before the benefits of corporate income tax accrue, fiscal strength had improved steadily in recent years, supported by continued fiscal consolidation."

Mr. Speaker, an independent assessment by a leading rating agency has concluded that Bermuda's progress did not begin with corporate income tax, but before. This reflects several years of sound fiscal management and execution of Bermuda's Economic Recovery Plan after the COVID-19 pandemic, which returned the Government's budget [to] surplus for the first time in over two decades, whilst still providing tax relief for workers, pension increases for our seniors and record investment in affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, the message from these three independent agencies is clear and consistent. Bermuda's public finances have entered a new era. The decisions taken by this Government are producing tangible outcomes recognised by the world's leading rating agencies.

Mr. Speaker, the specific figures cited in these reports speak for themselves. Bermuda's debt burden is expected to decline to 27 per cent of GDP, down from a peak of 49 per cent in 2020, during the pandemic. Our interest-to-revenue ratio is expected to fall below 6 per cent in 2026/27, compared with 13 per cent in 2020 at the height of the pandemic.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Moody's expects sustained fiscal surpluses of around 5 per cent of GDP over the next two to three years. And, as this Honourable House is already aware, this Government will repay \$605 million of debt, in full, in January 2027. This is the single largest repayment of national debt in Bermuda's history. And I agree with the Opposition Whip who is chuntering from a sedentary position that this is good news.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: He wanted . . . [I'll] say it again, Mr. Speaker. So, I will repeat it for the benefit of the Opposition Whip. This Government will repay \$605 million of debt, in full, in January 2027.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, KBRA, S&P Global and Moody's have also recognised the steps this Government is taking to safeguard these gains for the long term. Moody's noted the Government's plans to reinforce the fiscal policy framework, including formal fiscal

rules, the establishment of a stabilisation fund and sovereign wealth fund, and the continued use of the sinking fund. The agency said these measures, once in place, would "support the durability of fiscal surpluses and a more resilient decline in the debt burden."

Mr. Speaker, for Bermudians, these ratings have real and practical meaning. A stronger credit profile improves Bermuda's standing in global financial markets and supports investor confidence in our economy. Lower debt and lower interest costs for the Government can also filter across the economy, as the sovereign rating helps shape how financial institutions in Bermuda are viewed in global markets.

Mr. Speaker, the three independent rating agencies also identified longer-term challenges, including the structural constraints of Bermuda's small size, our economic concentration, and demographic pressures. The Government is addressing those issues through our Economic Development Strategy, our work on health care reform, and our plans to build fiscal buffers.

Why does that matter, Mr. Speaker? Because when you build those fiscal buffers, you give your country the ability to act when people need support. Just last month, when volatility in global oil markets threatened to push fuel prices sharply higher, this Government stepped in to hold prices steady shielding Bermudian households and businesses from higher costs at the pump. That is the difference fiscal discipline makes. Without it, Governments have no room to act when people need help most.

Mr. Speaker, before I close, I want to acknowledge the public officers in the Ministry of Finance and across government whose work has made this progress possible. I also want to thank the people of Bermuda. Through a challenging global period, Bermudians have stayed the course, and these improved ratings are a reflection of that collective effort.

Mr. Speaker, this Government remains focused on responsible financial management; reducing Bermuda's debt while investing in our people, upgrading our infrastructure, strengthening public education, expanding health care access, easing the burden on working Bermudians, and building a fairer, more stable and affordable Bermuda that the people of this country voted for in 2025.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

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

Minister, would you like to present your Statement this morning?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and I'll go in the order that they are listed in the Order Paper.

The Speaker: Yes, please follow the Order Paper, yes.

CITY OF HAMILTON GROUND FLOOR USE AND VACANCY SURVEY 2025

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to highlight the recent publication of the City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025 by the Department of Planning.

Mr. Speaker, you will recall that the City of Hamilton Plan 2025 was adopted on June 9, 2025. In preparing that Plan, the department undertook an extensive exercise of research and data collection to ensure that the end product was an evidence-based document, with a policy framework equipped to respond to the real-time circumstances, needs and opportunities of the City.

Mr. Speaker, as part of that data collection exercise, the department surveyed ground floor units across the City for the purposes of determining occupancy rates and gaining a clear understanding of the dispersal of uses across the City and how these factors impact the City's overall viability.

Mr. Speaker, ground floor occupancy surveys, or "health checks" as they are called in other jurisdictions, offer a tangible way of monitoring the vitality of a defined area, and consequently, its economic "health." The ground floor units of any city are what shapes the pedestrian experience, serving as the interface between buildings and the public realm. Furthermore, ground floor activity can often be the principal determinant in defining the overall perception that people have of an area.

Mr. Speaker, for these reasons, the Department of Planning believes that it is important to collect this data on a regular basis. Regular data collection and analysis also allow the department to effectively monitor the impacts of planning policy over time and respond to the findings, where necessary.

Mr. Speaker, the 2025 survey is an update of a similar exercise conducted in 2022, albeit with a refined methodology, designed to provide data with a higher degree of accuracy and reliability. While acknowledging that the methodology has evolved, I am pleased to report that the department's findings show that there has been a decline in the City's vacancy rates from approximately 15 per cent in 2022 to 10 per cent in 2025. For confirmation, the field surveys of the 2025 data took place in June and July of last year.

Mr. Speaker, the survey shows that there is a total of 944 ground-level units within the City, with 847 of those units being occupied at the time of the survey. I believe this speaks to a highly resilient city in the face of the ongoing challenging economic circumstances for high streets around the world. However, we cannot and will not rest on our laurels, as we are acutely aware of several prominent vacancies within our retail core.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is intent on continuing to support the economic growth of the City, as

evidenced by the designation of the City's two Economic Empowerment Zones and expanding the Approved Residential Schemes [ARS] initiative to cover the entire City. In addition, I am optimistic about the ongoing implementation of the City of Hamilton Plan 2025 and how its discretionary approach to decision-making can assist in unlocking the City's potential.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the ground floor uses, it is perhaps unsurprising to note that retailing is the most dominant with 220 units, followed by residential uses, which account for 188 ground floor units. As expected, retailing activity is highly concentrated in the southwestern quadrant of the City, in alignment with the Retail Core of the City of Hamilton Plan 2025. Residential uses predominate on the ground floor of properties located in the northeastern part of the City, which is again unsurprising given the long-established character of this area as a residential neighbourhood.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to emphasise the strong support offered within the City of Hamilton Plan 2025 for residential development in recognising that increasing and [densifying] residential uses within the City has multilayered benefits. For example, it offers a [sustainable] solution to the pressures being experienced within Bermuda's housing market by encouraging residents to live close to employment generators and reducing the need to travel to access services and facilities while also reducing the pressure for greenfield development in other parts of the Island. Increased residential development in the City also creates a greater catchment from which existing and prospective City-based businesses can benefit, thereby directly enhancing the City's economic conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the data has shown that there is a high diversity of ground floor uses within the City, which is a clear indication of a multifunctional urban core. The City serves a wide variety of needs, and this diversification of uses is a key factor in supporting the City's overall resilience.

Mr. Speaker, I am encouraged by the findings of this valuable data collection exercise and hope that we can continue to see a positive trend in reduced vacancy rates as the City enters a new era. Furthermore, I am also proud to see the Department of Planning delivering upon its commitments to produce key data on a more frequent and regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, the department has previously outlined the importance of evidence-based policy formulation; an approach which I firmly believe in and support. There must be a clear correlation between what is happening on the ground and how policies are responding to those conditions. This, Mr. Speaker, is what leads to the development of responsive planning policies which is truly fit for purpose.

Mr. Speaker, the department will continue to collect data in relation to a range of topics which are impacted by planning policy to ensure that established policy frameworks are having the intended effect and are remaining relevant and current. Monitoring the

long-term effects of planning policy, and consistently documenting this information, allows the department to enter a [cyclical] process of policy implementation, monitoring and refinement, constantly learning lessons and enabling the informed evolution of planning policy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister, the next Statement is also in your name. Would you like to continue?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to update this Honourable House on the successful launch of the Government's new digital portal, a major step toward modernising how the public accesses information and services.

Mr. Speaker, the portal is now live [and] serving the people of Bermuda, delivering on our commitment to create a simpler, more efficient, and more accessible way for the public to interact with Government.

For many years, residents, businesses, and community organisations have shared a common frustration, that government information could be difficult to find spread across multiple websites, or presented in ways that were not always clear or user-friendly. This new portal was designed to directly address those concerns. It brings together government services, official information, public updates, and essential resources into one organised platform, structured around how people actually seek information by topic, by task, and by life event.

Mr. Speaker, since its launch the portal has already begun to improve the user experience for the public. Pages are clearly structured, language has been simplified, and services are grouped in a way that allow users to move from information to action without unnecessary delays or confusion. One of the most valuable features has been the improved search function. Users can now enter simple, everyday terms and receive accurate and relevant results quickly. This reduces frustration, saves time, and helps ensure that people can complete what they came to do.

Mr. Speaker, the portal has also been built for the way people live and work today. Many residents access government services from their phones, and the platform performs consistently across mobile devices, tablets, and desktop computers. This ensures that services remain available wherever and whenever people need them. Accessibility has also been central to the design. The system meets recognised accessibility standards, ensuring that persons with disabilities, including those who rely on screen readers and other

assistive technologies, can use the platform independently and with confidence.

Mr. Speaker, privacy and security have been treated as fundamental priorities from the outset. The portal has been designed to safeguard personal information and ensure that data remains under government control. It does not rely on [unnecessary] external tracking tools, and security protections have been built into the platform from the start. Another important aspect of this achievement is how it has been delivered. This portal has been developed largely by our internal teams drawing on the expertise and commitment of public officers across government. By investing in our own people, we have reduced reliance on external vendors, avoided significant long-term licensing costs, and created a platform that can continue to evolve under the direct management of the public service. This also allows departments to make updates more efficiently, ensuring that information remains accurate, timely, and relevant for the public.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the officers across the Ministry of the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation, the Department of Communications, the Department of Information and Digital Technologies, and all supporting teams whose work made this possible; namely, David Wellman, Khaliah Nisbett, Deaje Trott, Moira Kelly, Delano Seymore.

Mr. Speaker, while the portal has now launched, this is not the end of the work. It is the foundation for continued improvement. The existing government website at www.gov.bm remains available during the transition period, while the new portal at www2.gov.bm continues to expand and improve based on public use and feedback.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative forms part of a wider programme of digital transformation across government. Work continues to

- increase the number of services that can be completed online, reducing the need for in-person visits;
- provide a more joined-up experience so that users do not have to navigate multiple departments to complete a single task;
- strengthen identity verification and data protection measures to maintain public trust;
- improve digital payment options, making transactions faster and more convenient;
- enable better coordination between government systems so that information can be shared appropriately across departments; and
- equip [public] officers with the digital skills needed to operate effectively in a modern public service environment.

Mr. Speaker, as we continue to expand the portal, further updates will be provided to ensure more government information is made available proactively and in a way that is easier for the public to access and understand. This is particularly important in supporting the Public Access to Information, PATI, process, where

members of the public request access to government records and information.

An important part of this work is improving how we engage with requesters early in the PATI process, helping them to better define and narrow broad requests and guiding them towards specific records that may already be publicly available or that can be accessed more efficiently.

By strengthening this approach, we can improve public understanding of the information government already holds, deliver faster and more effective service, and reduce the administrative burden that often comes with lengthy and resource intensive PATI request processing. In many cases, this will mean fewer formal information requests are needed because the right information can be found more quickly, more clearly, and with less delay through the portal itself.

Mr. Speaker, our overall goal is practical and straightforward, to deliver services that are easier to use, more reliable, and better suited to the expectations of the people we serve. This is about improving everyday interactions with government, whether someone is applying for a licence, paying a fee, accessing a public service, or simply trying to find accurate information.

We are not simply maintaining a website, we are improving how government communicates, how services are delivered, and how we respond to the needs of our community.

The launch of this portal represents a meaningful step towards a more modern, responsive, and efficient public service.

I encourage residents, businesses, community organisations, and all members of the public to visit www2.gov.bm, explore its features, and share their experiences so that we can continue refining the service and shaping a platform that truly reflects the needs of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY, UPDATE ON CONSULTATIVE DRAFT

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This morning, I rise to update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on the continued progress of the National Electricity Sector Policy, NESP, advanced by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Department of Energy. This work reflects this Government's determination to confront one of the most consequential issues facing our

country: the cost, reliability, and future of electricity in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, electricity powers every Bermudian home. It sustains every business on [this] Island. It underpins our national resilience. It shapes the cost of living, influences economic competitiveness, and determines how effectively we respond to a changing climate.

Mr. Speaker, the reform of electricity in Bermuda began in April 2025, when the Ministry became clear-eyed about what was required. In advance of a completed policy, a Ministerial Directive was issued to the Regulatory Authority of Bermuda signalling the policy direction. That Directive established three priorities:

- Enhanced transparency through annual reporting.
- Capacity building through resource development.
- A comprehensive review of the electricity transmission and distribution model to explore fairer pricing structures and identify cost-saving opportunities.

The Directive was the opening act for this reform. The National Electricity Sector Policy is the framework that brings this reform into alignment.

Mr. Speaker, I must be candid with this House about a matter that bears directly on why this policy is necessary. Bermuda's Integrated Resource Plan has been in various stages of development since 2019, establishing a target of 85 per cent renewable deployment, and in 2026 it has not been fully operational. Its provisions have not been stewarded into deployment. The IRP is the instrument that directs Bermuda's electricity future informed by the Government's policy. It charts the course for generation investment, infrastructure renewal, and the integration of renewable energy. It defines cost, reliability, and the pace of Bermuda's energy transition. The existing legislative framework established by the Electricity Act 2016, the IRP is proposed by the [electricity] utility and reviewed by the Regulatory Authority. A process which has proven cumbersome. Proposed plans often run contrary to the Government's policy, the very policy that Bermudians elected us to deliver.

In 2026, with families battling electricity costs compounded by global events, those delays are no longer something Bermuda can afford. The 2026 Policy seeks to address that failure. The Integrated Resource Planning sits at the centre of the framework, and the legislative amendments now in development will place responsibility for the preparing of the IRP to the Regulatory Authority, with input from the entire industry. The future of this sector requires precise regulatory rigour and disciplined implementation. Policy that is adopted and then left to languish serves no one.

Mr. Speaker, I recently participated in the International Visitor Leadership Programme focused on energy policy and development, sponsored by the US Department of State. I met with the institutions that shape

American energy governance. In Washington, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the Congressional Research Service. In Oklahoma, the Corporation Commission, with site visits to pipeline infrastructure and a hydropower facility. In Louisiana, the Public Service Commission and the LSU Center [for] Energy Studies. As well as [in Arizona] the Palo Verde Nuclear [Generating] Station.

Every jurisdiction I visited, regardless of size, structure, or political context, had made the same foundational choice. Deliberate reform. Genuine regulatory authority. Resource planning. Investment in people alongside infrastructure. The results were stable prices, transparent oversight, accountable planning, and energy markets built to serve the consumer.

Mr. Speaker, of note in Louisiana, the Public Service Commission built frameworks for large-scale energy investment with rigorous consumer protection. That approach attracts global technology companies seeking reliable, competitively priced power. The infrastructure built to serve the new businesses from generation to transmission to grid resilience benefited each and every existing customer.

These arrangements are projected to deliver billions in savings to residential and commercial customers over 20 years. Large customers fund energy efficiency programmes for the communities they have joined, supporting the vulnerable. The framework secures commitments to renewable development and grid resilience. Every benefit flows [to] the public because the regulatory architecture demands it.

Mr. Speaker, it is accepted that Bermuda is different and is a different jurisdiction with different constraints. We are a small Island with a single utility and a captive electricity market. The lessons learned [from Louisiana] about the architecture and vision can be applied here, though. When resource planning is rigorous, when regulatory oversight is precise, and when implementation is disciplined, energy reform delivers results for the public.

That experience reinforced a conviction that shapes every element in our policy. Bermuda's electricity sector requires the same commitment to deliberate, structured reform. Business as usual will produce the same outcomes we have always received. The people of Bermuda deserve better, and this Government will deliver better.

Mr. Speaker, the National Electricity Sector Policy establishes a clear and disciplined framework to guide the future of Bermuda's electricity sector. It is grounded in the central objective of delivering an electricity sector that is affordable, reliable, resilient, sustainable, and equitable for all Bermudians.

Affordability is at the forefront. Rising electricity costs place real and sustained pressure on households and businesses across the Island. The Policy reinforces the equal priority of reliability and resilience, ensuring that Bermuda's electricity infrastructure can

withstand disruption, respond to system pressures, and adapt to the realities of climate risk.

The policy moves away from prescriptive targets and focuses on least-cost development. The integrated resource planning process assesses all generation, infrastructure, and demand-side options on a consistent, evidence-based basis. The future IRP will be prepared with the regulatory rigour and implementation discipline that has been absent. Ambition must be matched with practical, [economically] sound execution.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that the Energy Policy Steering Committee, the EPSC, was established to support this work. We thank them for their input and expertise which brought together voices from across the electricity sector.

Mr. Speaker, the revised draft policy was published on the Citizens Forum on 20 April 2026 and will be live until 21 May. A town hall meeting will take place on Monday, 18 May. I encourage all Bermudians to read the draft policy and share their views.

Mr. Speaker, the reform of Bermuda's electricity sector is the defining infrastructure challenge of this generation. The decisions made will determine what Bermudians pay for power, how resilient our grid is when the next storm arrives, and whether our economy can compete in a world that is demanding more energy at lower cost.

I have seen what deliberate reform produces. I have also seen what is possible when regulation turns planning into deployment, and deployment into measurable savings for households and businesses.

This policy establishes the framework for legislative amendments and enforcement and I look forward to updating this Honourable House as this work advances.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the second Statement . . . the next Statement is also in the Minister's name.

Minister, would you like to proceed?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

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

LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT REFORM AND THE NATIONAL HOUSING REGISTRY FRAMEWORK UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I also rise today to update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on the ongoing work to modernise Bermuda's rental housing framework. The public may recall that the first phase of the public consultation on the draft Landlord and Tenant Act [2025] closed on 31 October 2025. The

work in the months since has been deliberate, detailed, and shaped by what the community has told us.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has committed to two reforms of consequence. The first is the modernisation of the broader tenancy framework, replacing the Landlord and Tenant Act [1974] and the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Act 1978 with a single, coherent statute fit for the realities of housing in Bermuda today. The second is the establishment of a National Housing Registry, the institutional architecture that will give the Government, landlords, and tenants a clear and current picture of the rental market for the first time in our country's history. These reforms are interrelated, and they are being advanced in parallel and connected with the broader and anticipated Landlord and Tenant Act [2026].

Mr. Speaker, the consultation we opened in September of last year was the most extensive engagement on rental reform that this Ministry has ever undertaken. Submissions were received from tenants, landlords, property managers, the [Bermuda] Bar Association, the Real Estate Division of the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce, and members of the public through the Citizens Forum. The Ministry also hosted a virtual town hall [meeting] to better outline the reform efforts underway. The Public Consultation Summary document was published on the Citizens Forum which captured what the public told us and will shape, and continue to shape, the refinement of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, since the close of the consultation, the Ministry has done three things.

First, every submission has been read and assessed. The drafters of this Bill, in partnership with the Attorney General's Chambers, have spent the months since the consultation working with each substantive issue.

Second, the policy framework underpinning the Bill has been developed in greater depth. The Cabinet has recently been invited to consider and approve the way that rents are administered. The framework that will be reflected in the upcoming consultative Bill will now distinguish clearly between the market setting the initial rent at the point of letting and the law governing how [that] rent changes once a tenant is in residence. That distinction is foundational. It preserves the freedom of contract that landlords expect, while giving tenants the protection from arbitrary rent increases that families need.

Mr. Speaker, this represents the abolition of the rent control regime as Bermuda has known it for nearly 50 years. It is not a withdrawal of oversight, but it is the replacement of an outdated mechanism with a modern regulatory framework that applies equally across the rental market. The change carries real meaning for the many Bermudian families who own their homes. Households that rely on rental income as part of their finances or their retirement security will have a clear right to invest in, maintain, and responsibly manage their properties, while operating within a

system that ensures fairness to the families who rent from them.

The Registry is being built with privacy by design, leveraging the existing design of the land valuation website which lists assessment numbers and tax figures, and further is informed by the architecture of jurisdictions including Scotland, where there is a Landlord Register that has been in operation since 2006, and Spain, where a centralised lease platform was established by Royal Decree [1312]/2024.

Mr. Speaker, critically, the Registry replaces the binary structure of the existing framework, where a single Annual Rental Value threshold has historically determined which tenants were protected and which were not. That structure created two classes of renter, the regulated and the unregulated, and cannot be defended in a modern housing system. Under the new framework, every residential rental property in Bermuda, regardless of its [rental] value, will be registered. Standards will apply universally, including standards for the quality of upkeep that tenants are entitled to expect.

Mr. Speaker, this is no different in principle from the verification that Bermuda already requires before entry into any regulated activity. A new business must register before it can trade. A vehicle must be verified before it can operate on our roads. A licensed profession cannot be practiced without authorisation. It is a right, and long overdue, that the activity of letting a home, among the most consequential transactions in any Bermudian family's life, be held to the same baseline.

Third, the Ministry has aligned this reform with the intentions outlined in the Affordable Bermuda Agenda published in [October] 2025. The updated Bill aims to protect what exists, ensure fair and equitable treatment in the existing market, and provide the data infrastructure that current and future strategies require.

Mr. Speaker, the refinement of legislation of this scale does take time. And the Ministry has been careful to ensure that such large consolidation is not rushed but does travel a considered journey. But likewise, the Ministry appreciates and intends to act on the relief that the public urgently deserves.

Mr. Speaker, as a reminder to this Honourable House, the original rent control law was passed in December 1971 as a one-year emergency measure, drawn from the Hong Kong Rent Control Act and set to expire on 31 December 1972. It was renewed year after year until 1978, when the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Act 1978 was passed and made permanent. That stopgap measure, written for the conditions of 1971, has carried the weight of Bermuda's tenant protection regime for nearly five decades. As a task given to this Minister and this Ministry, it was important that it not just be simply carried forward but assessed appropriately for modernisation. We accept that we are building institutional architecture intended to serve generations. The framework being constructed today must be capable of carrying the weight of a modern rental

market for the decades that follow, not only the year in which it is passed.

But, Mr. Speaker, the public should not be in doubt where this work stands. The Bill is being refined to reflect the feedback received. A second round of stakeholder and public engagement will be convened before the consolidated Bill is tabled in this [Honourable] House.

Mr. Speaker, the case for this reform has not weakened. Rather, it has strengthened. The Bermuda Monetary Authority has confirmed that mortgage rates have risen from 5.0 [per cent] to 7.5 per cent between 2022 and 2024, reducing household purchasing power by approximately 25.0 per cent. The [2025] Cost of Living Survey, which received 1,419 resident responses and 250 business responses, found that nearly 70.0 per cent of Bermudians report moderate to extreme financial strain relating to housing, and identified it as a top unaffordable necessity. The Rent Commission and Consumer Affairs continue to deal with more than 2,300 complaints from landlords and tenants year on year. The 59 rent-controlled properties currently listed as vacation rentals, with 52 conversions approved between 2024 and 2025, in the future will be visible, in one place, to the Government, and to the public (for the first time) to see where the Registry is.

Mr. Speaker, these are the conditions that demand this response. A market in which mortgage [costs] threaten [to] outpace incomes, in which [seven in ten] Bermudians report moderate to extreme financial strain, in which thousands of disputes go unresolved each year, and in which long-term rentals are quietly being converted to short-term lets which cannot continue to be governed by a one-year emergency measure from 1971 and a tenancy statute drafted before any of these conditions existed.

The Registry is required because we cannot regulate or improve what we cannot see. The end of the rental value threshold is required because the families it leaves unprotected have waited long enough. Universal standards are required because the condition of a Bermudian home should never depend on which side of [an arbitrary line] its rent falls. And these reforms are required now because every year of delay is another year in which Bermudian families absorb costs, live in challenging conditions and no one comes to check, another year that a modern legal framework underpinned by transparency does not evolve.

Mr. Speaker, what underpins this policy and legislative change is the construction of a fairer system. It is the institutional architecture that will determine whether housing in Bermuda becomes [more] affordable, more accessible, and more transparent in the years to come, or whether it does not. This Government has chosen, deliberately and with care, to take the time required to build that architecture properly.

The Ministry will return to this [Honourable] House with the consolidated Landlord and Tenant Act, incorporating the broader landlord and tenant ...

reform and the integration of the national housing registry framework.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues, and listening public.

The Speaker: Good morning.

MEDICAL CANNABIS FRAMEWORK

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda with an update on the Government's ongoing work in relation to the development of a medical cannabis framework. This initiative reflects a careful, measured, and clinically responsible approach to improving patient access to cannabis-based medicines and medical cannabis products under strict medical supervision and regulatory oversight.

Mr. Speaker, for many years Bermuda's legislative framework has classified cannabis as a controlled drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1972. While limited exemptions currently exist for certain cannabis-based medicines, access has remained narrow, administratively complex, and insufficiently structured to meet evolving patient and clinical needs.

This Government recognises that there are many people in our community living with serious medical conditions who are seeking additional treatment options under the guidance of their health care providers. We are also aware that medical cannabis is one treatment that has grown significantly in usage throughout the world as an alternative to traditional prescriptions.

We also recognise that any approach to medical cannabis must be carefully developed, clinically responsible, legally sound, and supported by appropriate safeguards. Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the work now underway.

Mr. Speaker, as Honourable Members will be aware, Cabinet has approved the progression of policy and legislative work to support the establishment of a regulated medical cannabis framework in Bermuda.

The objective of this work is straightforward: to examine how Bermuda can create a safe and lawful pathway that improves access for patients with legitimate medical needs, while maintaining robust protections against misuse, diversion, and abuse. As part of that objective, we seek to treat approved cannabis-based medicines and regulated medical cannabis products in the same manner as other controlled

prescription medications that may be lawfully prescribed by registered medical practitioners and dispensed through licensed pharmacies.

Mr. Speaker, medical cannabis is not a simple policy issue. It sits at the intersection of health care regulation, controlled drug legislation, public safety, professional clinical practice, and international legal obligations. As such, this work requires careful coordination across Government to ensure that whatever framework ultimately emerges is practical, enforceable, and in the public interest.

For that reason, this work is being progressed collaboratively, including engagement between the Ministry of National Security, the Ministry of Health, and the Attorney General's Chambers. I hasten to thank my colleagues and their teams at the Ministry of Health and the Attorney General's Chambers for their valuable contributions in developing this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Health brings essential clinical and public health expertise to this work, particularly in relation to patient safety, prescribing oversight and health care regulation.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney General's Chambers is providing critical legal guidance to ensure that any proposed legislative approach is coherent, legally robust, and appropriately aligned with Bermuda's existing statutory framework and international obligations.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to be clear with the public on this matter so that there is no confusion about what we are trying to achieve. I, therefore, want to state that this work remains in development and that no final legislative model has been settled. That is intentional.

Mr. Speaker, this framework will be grounded in several important principles. Firstly, medical autonomy. Registered physicians in Bermuda should be able to determine, in their professional judgment, whether cannabis-based treatment is clinically appropriate for a patient.

Secondly, patient protection and access. Bermudians suffering from serious or chronic medical conditions should be able to access approved therapeutic treatments through a safe, lawful, and medically supervised process.

Thirdly, public safety and accountability. Any framework permitting medical cannabis must include robust safeguards, clear standards, and effective oversight mechanisms to prevent misuse and ensure proper clinical governance.

And fourthly, regulatory consistency. Cannabis-based medicines should be regulated within Bermuda's existing health care and controlled-drug framework rather than through the creation of a separate or parallel regime.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's focus at this stage is on getting the framework right, rather than moving prematurely toward a predetermined outcome. What is settled, however, is the policy direction. We are seeking an approach that supports legitimate patient access to medical cannabis through proper medical

channels, respects clinical judgment, maintains appropriate oversight, and preserves the safeguards necessary to prevent misuse.

Mr. Speaker, we are not trying to create unregulated access. Rather, we are developing a framework that ensures responsible access to medical cannabis. Under the proposed system, only registered medical practitioners will be permitted to prescribe approved cannabis products for medical use. Only licensed pharmacies and approved medical institutions will be authorised to import and dispense those products. Direct importation by individual patients will not be permitted.

Mr. Speaker this proposal aligns Bermuda with international best practices and remains fully consistent with our obligations under the United Nations' Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961, which expressly permits the medical and scientific use of cannabis under strict regulatory control.

Mr. Speaker, many jurisdictions with comparable legal and health care systems—including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and several Caribbean countries—have already implemented similar medical cannabis frameworks. Bermuda's approach is therefore neither experimental nor reckless. It is cautious, evidence-informed, and centred firmly on health care regulation and patient well-being.

Mr. Speaker, our aim is to ensure that patients who may genuinely benefit from medically supervised cannabis-based treatment can do so within a clear, lawful, and accountable framework. As this work progresses, we will continue to give careful consideration to regulatory controls, prescribing standards, product quality assurance, importation arrangements, pharmacy oversight, enforcement implications, and broader public health protections.

Mr. Speaker, the Government appreciates that there is significant public interest in this issue, particularly among patients and families who have been advocating for more treatment options. I assure this Honourable House and the public that we hear these concerns, and we understand the urgency felt by many. I hasten to add that we also have a duty to ensure that any framework introduced is feasible, responsible, and sustainable.

Mr. Speaker, I shall provide further updates to this Honourable House on our progress towards developing the medical cannabis framework.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA—IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to provide this Honourable House with a clear update on the Government's progress in implementing ridesharing in Bermuda and then to reaffirm the disciplined, balanced approach we are taking to strengthen transportation access for residents and visitors alike.

This initiative is part of the Government's broader, measured plan to modernise Bermuda's [public] transportation system—grounded in evidence, responsive to demand, and carefully structured to support, not destabilise, the existing taxi industry. Mr. Speaker, the guiding principle remains clear and unchanged: taxis first; rideshare when needed.

Ridesharing is not intended to replace taxis. It will complement the existing system by adding capacity when demand outstrips supply, particularly [late] at night, on weekends, and during peak visitor periods. In other words, this rollout is deliberate, this rollout is controlled, and this rollout is focused on service reliability.

Mr. Speaker, following the passage of the relevant legislative framework, the Government opened the ridesharing application process on 30 April 2026. The application window was initially scheduled to close yesterday, 14 May [2026] at 5:00 pm. As of 14 May (yesterday at 5:00 pm), we had received 50 applications—an encouraging response that demonstrates public interest.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House is reminded that ridesharing permits will be capped at 150 to ensure a controlled rollout and to maintain balance within Bermuda's wider transportation system. Where applications exceed 150 by the specified deadline, a third-party randomisation process was to be used to ensure that the selection was fair and unbiased. Because the cap has not been reached, Mr. Speaker, selection will proceed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Mr. Speaker, participation in the ridesharing programme requires that all operators are properly licensed. Applicants must hold a valid public service vehicle (PSV) licence. To date, 30 applications have been received from individuals seeking to obtain [or] renew a public service vehicle licence. The majority are from those who are interested in then going ahead and applying for a ridesharing [permit], Mr. Speaker. The department is actively supporting these [applicants] to complete the required steps so they can qualify for ridesharing and then apply.

Mr. Speaker, given the level of interest to date, I am pleased to report that the application process will remain open beyond the deadline that was previously set of 14 May [2026] until the full allocation of 150 ridesharing permits have been issued. This extension provides eligible applicants additional time to complete public service vehicle licensing requirements and submit their permit applications, while ensuring that all interested persons have a fair opportunity to apply.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to licensing requirements, applicants must first meet all relevant safety, vetting, and vehicle standards. For clarity and to protect the integrity of this programme, persons who hold a licence to operate a heavy truck or other commercial vehicle are not eligible to apply for a ridesharing permit or to operate an approved ridesharing vehicle.

Mr. Speaker, passenger trips will be facilitated through licensed dispatch companies, and ridesharing services will operate within Bermuda's existing regulatory framework, with clear accountability for compliance and enforcement.

This initiative is one of the broader transportation modernisation programmes already underway, including

- the introduction of digital fare payments through the ShoreLink platform;
- real-time tracking of buses and ferries, providing the public with improved visibility and reliability;
- continued investment in the public bus and ferry fleet; as well as
- the advancement of enforcement and compliance measures across the sector.

Together, these efforts are improving the overall customer experience, Mr. Speaker, strengthening the resilience of Bermuda's public transportation system.

Mr. Speaker, we recognise that the taxi industry has been a cornerstone of Bermuda's transportation system and an important part of our economy. That is precisely why this model has been designed to support—not undermine—the existing industry. The “taxi first” approach, the permit cap, and the strong regulatory safeguards ensure a balanced implementation that prioritises service, safety, as well as fairness.

Mr. Speaker, ultimately, this work is about delivering practical results: Shorter wait times when demand spikes, more certainty for residents trying to get home safely at night, and a more reliable experience for visitors—while maintaining a controlled system that respects the role of taxis.

Subject to final operational readiness, the Government is targeting the launch of ridesharing services with the first group of approved operators on or around 10 June 2026.

As we move into the next phase, this Honourable House and the public will receive further updates on permit allocation, operational milestones, and the commencement of service.

Our focus remains on delivering a system that is safe, fair, and responsive—one that improves access, strengthens confidence in public transportation, and meets the needs of Bermuda's residents and visitors alike.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement is also in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to proceed?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If I can have just one second.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

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

BERMUDA DAY 2026: ANNOUNCEMENT OF GRAND MARSHALS

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, today I rise to announce the Grand Marshals for the 2026 Bermuda Day Parade, a group of outstanding individuals whose lives and contributions reflect the very spirit of this year's Heritage Month theme, “For the Culture.”

Mr. Speaker, as I shared previously, “For the Culture” is a celebration of the people, their traditions, and their creative expressions that define Bermuda. It speaks to the pride that we carry, the stories that we tell, and the responsibility we share to preserve and uplift our cultural identity. It is both a reflection of who we are and a call to continue building on that legacy.

Mr. Speaker, each year, the selection of Grand Marshals provides an opportunity to honour individuals whose contributions have shaped Bermuda's culture in meaningful and lasting ways, often without widespread recognition. These [are] individuals who have worked with consistency, passion, and quiet impact, building, preserving, and strengthening our culture and community over time. In recognising them, we ensure that their influence is not only acknowledged but celebrated as an essential part of Bermuda's story.

Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to announce the 2026 Bermuda Day Parade Grand Marshals, “For the Culture”:

Mr. Speaker, Demeka “Tiny T” Tacklyn is a standout presence in Bermuda's cultural community. As a young girl, she famously found her way into Richardson's Gombey's as the troupe's only female member, beginning a lifelong connection to Bermuda's traditions through dance and performance. She later represented Bermuda internationally as a dancer and gained national recognition after winning Bermuda's first Dancehall Queen competition. Her work extends far beyond performance into entrepreneurship and youth development, creating spaces where creativity, confidence, and culture can thrive. Through her continued efforts, she has shown what it means to live and lead “For the Culture.”

Mr. Speaker, Jules Roberts, the voice and spirit behind Ital Foundation, has been a cornerstone of Bermuda's reggae movement for decades. Since the late 1970s his music has carried messages of unity, resistance, and cultural pride. Rooted in Rastafarian spirituality, his songs tell the stories, struggles, and experiences of everyday Bermudians in the tradition of [a] griot, using music to preserve and share the voice of

the people. As both a performer and a mentor, he has shaped generations of musicians and ensured that Bermuda's voice continues to be heard through the universal language of music.

Mr. Speaker, Tawana Lee (my former classmate) has dedicated her life to preserving and strengthening Bermuda's majorette and drum corps tradition. Through her leadership of the PHC Majorettes & Drum Corps, she has built not only a performance group but a community grounded in discipline, inclusion, and pride. At a time when many majorette groups across Bermuda have faded away, Tawana continued to carry the tradition forward, ensuring that the majorette culture remained visible, vibrant, and alive for a new generation. Her commitment to youth development and cultural education has ensured that this cherished part of Bermuda's heritage continues to grow and inspire future generations.

Mr. Speaker, Sonya Smith is a distinguished figure in Bermuda's sporting history, whose achievements in track and field have left a lasting mark on the Island. From a young age, she demonstrated exceptional talent, setting national records in javelin and earning multiple medals at the Carifta Games. She went on to represent Bermuda at major international competitions, including the Commonwealth Games as well as the Olympic Games. Her dedication, discipline, and achievements continue to inspire generations of Bermudian athletes to pursue excellence in sport.

Mr. Speaker, we [also] take this moment to honour the late Allan Warner, a legendary Gombey whose influence continues to resonate across Bermuda. From a young age he dedicated himself to the art of Gombey, leading Warner Gombeyers for over five decades with passion and integrity. His work as a performer, mentor, and cultural ambassador helped to preserve and elevate this vital tradition, leaving a legacy that continues to guide and inspire.

Mr. Speaker, these five individuals may come from different paths and disciplines, but they are united by a shared commitment to community and cultural pride. They epitomise this year's theme, "For the Culture," through the way they have preserved traditions, uplifted others, and contributed meaningfully to the cultural and sporting life of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Culture looks forward to celebrating these Grand Marshals alongside all participants during the Bermuda Day Parade (which is one week from today) [on] Friday, May 22, 2026. This year's parade will once again bring our streets to life with colour, sound, and creativity, with more than 60 participating entries reflecting the energy and diversity of our people. After receiving rave reviews last year, the parade will once again conclude in traditional fashion with the Gombeyers, followed by a 30-minute intermission before the celebrations continue with an after-party featuring a high-flying, high-energy Soca truck.

Mr. Speaker, the department has also worked closely with participants and stakeholders this year to

strengthen parade flow. We are also going to strengthen the parade pacing and the overall event management to improve the experience for participants as well as spectators alike. As participation continues to grow, these efforts are important to ensure that Bermuda Day remains safe, enjoyable, and full of energy and spirit that our people have come to love.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Bermudians to come out, support our participants, and show up "For the Culture."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning to the listening audience.

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY WORKS ACROSS THE ISLAND, UPDATE

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda with an update on major infrastructure works and public improvement projects being delivered across our Island.

Over the past year serving in this role, I have come to appreciate that much of Government's work is not always immediately visible to the public. Infrastructure projects often move forward quietly through planning, coordination, procurement, repairs, and steady execution long before the result can be seen and fully appreciated.

At the same time the people of Bermuda quite rightly expect to know what is being delivered and what practical difference these projects will make in their daily lives. That understanding continues to shape the Ministry of Public Works and Environment's approach, with a focus on disciplined delivery, clear oversight, and consistent communication.

Over recent months, this Government has continued making meaningful investments in Bermuda's public infrastructure. Whether in health care, roads, docks, public buildings, water infrastructure, or recreational facilities, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment remains focused on delivering improvements that Bermudians can see and benefit from in their daily lives.

Mr. Speaker, during the recent Royal Visit, His Majesty the King officially opened the new St. David's Coast Guard Station. This project represents not only an important investment in Bermuda's maritime response capability, but also the successful repurposing

of an underutilised government facility into infrastructure that now serves as a practical and nationally important purpose. The building itself is now ready for occupation, with final dock works continuing.

Mr. Speaker, the restoration of the Mangrove Bay Clinic in Sandys similarly reflects this Government's commitment to revitalising public assets and returning essential services to communities. The building has now been returned to its health care function and transformed into a modern facility that will once again provide important community services to residents in the west. Physical works began in May 2025, and the project is now substantively complete. Final operational items remain underway, and the clinic is anticipated to open in June of this year, subject to confirmation by the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, significant progress has also been made in improving community and recreational infrastructure across the Island. Repairs to the docks at White's Island and Ports Island were completed ahead of the summer season, alongside additional maintenance works at several public dock facilities to support safe public access and recreational use.

In the east, the Ministry, together with the Bermuda Land Management Corporation, recently opened a new 24-hour water truck outlet at Carter's Bay Road in Southside. This facility will reduce travel times for water operators servicing St. David's and St. George's while easing pressure on the central water distribution network. Mr. Speaker, this is something many within the water trucking industry have been requesting for some time and it is something the Government is proud to have delivered.

Continuing in the east, the upgraded public boat ramp at Stonecrusher Corner has now been completed and reopened in time for the powerboat racing season, supporting both community recreation and one of Bermuda's long-standing sporting traditions. Importantly, the upgraded facility will also support operational access for the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard and improve functionality for marine response activities in the area.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is also continuing to advance major national infrastructure projects that will shape Bermuda for decades to come.

The Request for Proposal process for the replacement of Swing Bridge is now officially underway, with contractors invited to bid on this critical national project. This marks a major milestone and an important step toward the eventual construction of a modern replacement bridge that will improve reliability, resilience, and connectivity for residents and businesses in the East End.

Earlier this month, the Ministry hosted a networking event connected to the project, bringing together local contractors and prospective international bidders as part of the Government's commitment to ensuring meaningful local participation in major infrastructure investment.

Mr. Speaker, important progress is also being made in preserving and upgrading public buildings and government infrastructure.

At Government House, significant works have recently been completed, including roof repairs, electrical upgrades, water storage improvements, kitchen upgrades, and restoration works within the historic property.

At Sessions House, work is continuing to support the long-term restoration and modernisation of this important parliamentary building. Arrangements have now been completed to advance renovation planning and prepare the way for the formal procurement phase of the project. I can also advise this Honourable House that following the upcoming Bermuda Day holiday the next phase of work will commence with internal demolition and preparatory works within the building as part of the broader restoration effort.

Mr. Speaker, while major capital projects often receive the greatest public attention, much of the Ministry's work takes place every day within communities across Bermuda. Over the past few months, numerous smaller but important infrastructure improvements have been completed across the Island. These include new safety railings and fencing at Mullet Bay Park, Cook's Hill, and Mangrove Bay Road, new bus shelters at Clearwater Beach, Texas Road, and Malabar Road, additional pedestrian safety beacons near King Edward [VII] Memorial Hospital and the Bermuda Athletic Association.

Road paving and improvement works have also been completed in several areas, including Verdmont Road, the Flatts area, Orange Valley Road, and Spanish Point.

In addition to these completed works, several projects remain actively underway, including the Grotto Bay bus lay-by expansion and associated sidewalk and traffic infrastructure works. These works will not only assist with better traffic flow but also improve safety measures for pedestrians.

The Ministry has also made significant improvements to the water network that services communities such as Cedar Park and Mary Victoria. This includes replacing ageing pipeline infrastructure and upgrades designed to improve reliability, and overall service delivery to residents in these areas. This work is still ongoing, but we are making steady progress. Mr. Speaker, while meaningful progress is being made, I fully acknowledge that there is still much more work ahead.

Bermudians continue to expect improvements to roads, public facilities, and infrastructure across the Island, and rightly so. Capital projects do not happen overnight, but this Government remains committed to steadily moving the country forward through practical action and continued investment. This Government remains committed to investing responsibly in public infrastructure, modernising critical assets, and ensuring taxpayers see visible results from those investments.

We are making progress.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: We are improving Bermuda's infrastructure, and we will continue doing the work necessary to build a stronger and more resilient Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements for this morning. We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: The next item after that is Question Period, but before I go on to the Question Period, I would just like to acknowledge in the Gallery this morning, former Senator, former Attorney General, Mr. Phil Perinchief. Nice to have you in the Chamber today, sir.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Good. All right.

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: And this morning I read off the acknowledgement of Members who had communicated with us. I omitted mentioning that [MP] Jamahl Simmons had also indicated his absence today. So, I just wanted that noted.

We will now move on.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: This morning we have written questions, which we will begin with and then we will move on to the questions from the Statements that were [given] this morning.

The first of the written questions this morning . . . and for the listening audience and for the Members and the visitors in the Gallery, the written questions just require two responses. Either a written response, which is given to the Opposition Member who asked, or an oral response, which we all participate [in].

The first three questions this morning are all seeking written responses. The first is to the Junior Minister of Justice and Spokesman for Education. The question was asked by the Opposition Leader, Mr. Ben Smith.

[Opposition Leader], have you received the written questions?

Hon. Ben Smith: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have. Thank you.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

QUESTIONS: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION STAFF, OVERSIGHT AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT OF

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House whether formal performance evaluations are conducted for teachers, school principals, paraprofessionals, and education officers within the Ministry of Education?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how many teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, and Ministry administrators were identified as underperforming through formal evaluations, for each of the past five academic years?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how many teachers, principals, paraprofessionals, and Ministry administrators were placed on performance improvement plans, disciplinary action, reassignment, or removal from their position for each of the past five academic years?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second question is also to the same Junior Minister and Spokesman for Education, but those questions, the answers are being carried over for a later date. Thank you.

The third question this morning requiring a written response is to the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, and that is from MP Robin Tucker.

MP Tucker, have you received your written responses?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I have. Thank you.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

QUESTIONS: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME, ADMINISTRATION AND OVERSIGHT OF GROCERY PARTNERSHIPS

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with a list of all grocery stores with which the Government currently partners for the purpose of administering

the Financial Assistance Programme, and the dates on which each partnership was established?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please provide for this Honourable House the total amount paid to each participating grocery store under the Financial Assistance Programme, broken down by year and by store for the past ten years?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please outline for this Honourable House the process used to determine which grocery items qualify as essential for the purposes of the Financial Assistance Programme, including any consultation undertaken with relevant professionals, community organizations, or other stakeholders in developing this determination?

The Speaker: Thank you.

So now I will move on to the next series of questions, and they are all seeking an oral response, and the first written question that requires an oral response is from MP Douglas DeCouto.

Would you like to put your question?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: These questions are to the Honourable Minister Hayward, Minister of Economy and Labour.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 1: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House why youth unemployment almost tripled from 3.4 per cent in November 2024 to 9.3 per cent in May 2025, as reported by the May 2025 Labour Force Survey.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the Labour Force Survey does not capture the factors surrounding the movement of numbers. It simply provides the trend of the numbers presented.

The Speaker: Okay.
You have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker, supplementary.

Is this House to understand that the Minister does not know why the youth unemployment tripled?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, my responsibility is to provide statements of fact. The only way of knowing statements of fact would be if the survey captured that particular information. I can speak to correlations. I can speak to reasons why. For example, when youth unemployment dropped from . . . when it was at over 30 per cent and then fell down to underneath 10 per cent, there were a number of factors, including youth getting more employment opportunities in Bermuda, youth being provided with more scholarships. All of those are correlations. They are not fact. And so, what we want to do is ensure that we provide factual information. And the survey doesn't capture the information why one is now unemployed where they would have been employed in the previous reporting period.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker, second supplementary.

If the Minister cannot explain the rise in the youth unemployment, how does he expect the Government to properly craft its policies to address the increase in youth unemployment?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, we deliberately put a Youth Employment Strategy in place. The Youth Employment Strategy was to tackle youth unemployment. We looked at a number of factors [as to] why youth were unemployed at the particular time when we put out the Strategy, and we provided goals associated with that. And so, we will continue to support our young people. I think that's the most important question that can possibly [be] asked: What is the Government doing to support the young people of Bermuda? And if that question was actually asked, I would be able to provide factual information as to the work that the Bermuda Government is doing to support our young persons in transitioning into employment.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you Mr. Speaker.
Just trying to qualify a previous answer that he gave. The Minister was able to answer and qualify why

unemployment in . . . sorry, employment increased for youth and gave not just fact, but qualifying statements to it. Why can we not get qualified statements [as] to why it went down? He was able to do it for the increase of employment. Why can we not get . . . or did we not correlate some facts [as] to why? I mean, facts are only gotten because you are correlating information together. We should be able to get *some* form of idea why.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: Your question is, why can't he provide the other? I am trying to—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, my question is, if we can . . . if we can . . . my question is, if we can give qualification to a fact for the *increase of employment* for our youth, why can we not do it also for the *increase in unemployment* for the youth?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Statement of fact. The data presented in the May 2025 and May 2024 Labour Force Survey Reports must be interpreted with a technical caution—that is written in the report—as direct comparisons between non-seasonally adjusted survey periods may lead to misleading conclusions. That is the road I don't want to go down today . . . provide us with misleading conclusions.

But the reality remains that there are more youth unemployed in this survey period than in previous survey periods. To what extent that is alarming, we will continue to provide the support to our youth that is actually required. But when we look at global youth unemployment rates they average around 12.5 per cent. Our youth unemployment rate is 9.0 per cent, and so we are still lower than the global average.

From an area of concern, the Department of Workforce Development will continue to execute on its Youth Employment Strategy to support bridges to employment for our young people.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Mr. Speaker, considering what the Minister has just said, will he take it upon himself (and maybe it's too early because he just got the facts) to qualify why he sees this happening again? We go back to the original question that I asked. It would be good to understand the variables because we are trying to fix it. If we just go off of a number, numbers speak to what is going on. It is not just a fact. The numbers are saying something, but the numbers are qualifying that there is something real human going on, whether it's process, whether we have less people, all of these things. And I am hoping that the Minister can give us . . . I am asking, Can he give us more

qualification as to why (in the future, because I am sure he has to get more information as to why) we see this happening, a tripling of the unemployment for youth?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I asked the question in the beginning. Can he (in the future) give us a qualifying answer?

The Speaker: In the future can he provide—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, because he needs more information.

The Speaker: —some future information. Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I take it. I gather that.

The Speaker: You are saying you understand he doesn't have the information now, but would he undertake in the future to provide something?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Typically, the Labour Force Survey is accompanied by a statement to the extent that I have the information, I will actually provide it.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you. Thank you, Minister. MP DeCouto, that was the conclusion of your first question. Would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

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

Will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House why, according to the May 2025 Labour Force Survey, the non-Bermudian median income rose 28.1 per cent from November 2024 to May 2025, but the Bermudian median income decreased, minus 1.3 per cent?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I believe the statement that I . . . the answer that I provided in the past holds null in terms of we do not have the data regarding why these factors have occurred. But what I would say is [that] it is interesting when the Opposition craftily picks indicators out of an entire report of numbers to provide—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

Hon. Jason Hayward: No, no, no, no. What is going on?

The Speaker: The Member hadn't even finished giving his point yet.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Let him finish what he is saying first. Let him finish what he was saying first.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Let him finish.
Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: There is a plethora of positive trends in that particular report including the fact that we have statistical full employment in Bermuda, and we have maintained one of the lowest unemployment rates—

An Hon. Member: Not for youth.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —across any region.

An Hon. Member: Survey says?

Hon. Jason Hayward: The survey would also show that our youth unemployment rates are lower than global average, and so those are statements of facts. And as much as we can possibly provide the factors as to why those trends occur, we will provide those.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Does the Minister accept that if they are not able to understand why Bermudian pay is decreasing while non-Bermudian pay is increasing a lot, nobody should have any confidence, including this House or the general public, that the plans they put into place will actually address those issues if the Government doesn't even know why they are happening in the first place?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, that is incorrect. What he has looked at is simply one factor, and he is making a comparison, the same comparison that the technical note in the Labour Force Survey asks us not to make and be cautious about making, and he's

fallen into that trap. You know why? Because it's politically convenient for him to highlight that.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.
Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Point of order. Point of order. Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive and Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Minister is both imputing improper motive and also misleading the House. Number one, it's not politically convenient to have a discussion about why Bermudians are making less money while non-Bermudians are making more money, because I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, if it went the other way, there would have been press conferences galore when this report went out.

Second, regarding the seasonality adjustment, I carefully looked at it, and there was no seasonal trend that explains these between the May and the November, okay? It is not a seasonal adjustment issue, in my personal view, as someone who has practiced—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —who has practiced professionally—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —in the practice of statistics and trades—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.
The Standing Orders specifically state that we discuss facts. The Honourable Member cannot get up on a point of order where the Minister has quoted from a statistical document and say, *in my opinion*, he doesn't agree with it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Come on now.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, I have done a fact—

The Speaker: Now, wait, wait, wait . . . one minute.

The Minister has gone to great lengths to try and state that what he is referring to is the factual information that was provided from the report. The report doesn't produce the why's and the how's (my words), but it does produce . . . what he is giving are the facts of the outcome of the report, factually and to date. It isn't an opinion, it isn't a viewpoint, it's the facts of the report.

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

My questions are not actually about the report. My questions are about the reasons which the Minister was unable to answer.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member was not recognised, and he took his seat by you.

The Speaker: I did, I did . . . I did look at him just now. I did acknowledge him. I did acknowledge him.

Hon. E. David Burt: But, Mr. Speaker, may I ask as to what reason he's on his feet?

An Hon. Member: Sit down.

Hon. E. David Burt: Is he asking questions, or is he still giving a statement?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No, no. No, no.

An Hon. Member: Let the Speaker do his job.

The Speaker: Take a seat and I'll do what I've got to do. Sit down.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Sit down, speaker, please—Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I accept that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Whoa! Whoa!

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no, address your point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry?

The Speaker: I'll address your point of order.

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

The Speaker: I said I will address it.

I acknowledged him because he had put a question on his point of order that we stopped him on. And I acknowledged him only in that he was going to either withdraw his statement, his point of order, or better clarify his point of order because we told him it was based on the facts, and if his point of order can raise something factual, he can continue. If it isn't, then he can't go on. So, he was just given the opportunity to see if he could factually put his point of order. That's all that was because we pointed out that this was based on responses from the Minister. It was based on factual information. If he can come up with a factual point of order, it will be acknowledged. If he can't, then there isn't.

So, I was giving him that opportunity just to clean it up, but it didn't happen. Okay?

If you can factually put a point of order, you have the floor. If not . . .

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

I had used commonly accepted statistical techniques according to my professional training and the numbers provided in the report—

The Speaker: Factually to the report.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —to identify that it is not a seasonal issue driving these results.

The Speaker: But, but—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Whoa!

The Speaker: I am doing it.

I am doing it. Sit down. Take your time.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: It has to be related directly to the state of the report, and that's where we're getting caught up on other aspects that you are trying to bring into it versus the factuality of the report.

My suggestion at this point would be—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Let's just move on so that we can get to something that may be more factual in what you are seeking to find. Okay? Good.

Now, do you still have a second question?

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes. You still have a . . . no, no, this is on the supplementary. He asked one supplementary. You still have a second supplementary on that.

Would you like to put a second supplementary or move on to the third question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I have a second supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Is it factually related to the report?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: It is related to the question as written on the Order Paper, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you.

I believe the Government would agree with us that the trends identified in the question are disturbing. Does the Government currently have any specific plans to adjust those trends in Bermudian pay versus non-Bermudian pay as outlined in the original question?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: We accept that there shouldn't be disparities as it pertains to the trends of Bermudian pay and non-Bermudian pay.

We have alternative statistical reports which show us that Bermudian pay is progressing within society and that this may be a result of sampling rather than actual things that are taking place within our society because we have alternative data that comes from employee compensation, which we can clearly see that employee income is trending above inflation.

We also note that the vast majority of public servants would have received pay increases. And the vast majority of public servants are Bermudians. And so, from that particular standpoint as well, we know that the salary of those individuals would increase. We will also be making revisions to the minimum wage, and we have seen the minimum wage increase. And so, when you look at all of the additional information you can clearly see that there has been a progression in the salary of Bermudian pay. And where the salaries haven't progressed, the Government has reduced taxes on those individuals, so the purchasing power does remain higher.

The Speaker: Okay.

That was your second supplementary. Would you now like to move on to your third question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will work hard so that we don't retread old ground here.

The Speaker: That would be helpful.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 3: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, REASONS UNDEREMPLOYMENT RATE INCREASED

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Minister please explain for this Honourable House why, according to the May 2025 Labour Force Survey, the underemployment rate increased from 7.8 per cent in November 2024 to 8.4 per cent in May 2025?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the data presented in May 2025 and November 2024 Labour Force Survey reports must be interpreted with a technical caution, as direct comparisons between non-seasonally adjusted survey periods may lead to misleading conclusions. But here is a factual trend. When the Government puts out positive information, the Opposition remains silent.

When the—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: He, he—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We had a statement given this morning—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Let him finish. He might have been . . . let him finish his point. Let him finish his point. Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: For example, when GDP, quarterly GDP, increased by 9.9 per cent, there was no public statement made by the Opposition. However, when GDP abated by just under a per cent, there was a public statement made by the Opposition—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward:—stating that the Economic Development Strategy did not work. I just want to highlight the trend of cherry-picking—

An Hon. Member: Cherry-picking.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Cherry-picking information for political convenience.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay. Ah! Ah! Before you . . . Minister, we appreciate your comment, but let us not throw any political points in between. The points that you raised were spot on, but you need to put a little . . . side of it, please.

Hon. E. David Burt: Just the facts.

The Speaker: MP—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary, but I—

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You did give the Minister some leeway. And if the Minister is not happy with the job being done by the Department of Communication and Information Services, I am sure I would be happy to take a meeting with him and give him some advice, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I note that—

The Speaker: Put your supplementary now.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: My supplementary is . . . I note that in previous answers to my supplementary, the Minister quoted quite a few supporting facts and figures at his hands as a Minister, and I wonder if he might be able to apply a similar range of facts and figures that he referred to already today towards the explanation of this increase in the underemployment rate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: So, more facts and figures you are seeking. That was the question.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Certainly. When we put out the information, it is important for us to understand the trends. Once we understand the trends, you understand the factors underlying the particular trends. You

also have a clear understanding of what underemployment is and what underemployment is not.

And so, underemployment can be qualitative and a very subjective measure. Underemployment can come from someone who is seeking a promotion within their job and hasn't got a promotion yet. Underemployment can also come from somebody who has a decent job in a decent occupational category but seeks to work in an alternative occupational category, and as a result they will be listed as underemployed because they are not working in the primary job in which they desire. And so, underemployment will always exist because there is a mismatch between the exact jobs that are desired by residents within a population and the jobs that are provided in your economy.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? None.

That brings us to a close of the questions that were submitted by MP DeCouto.

The next written question that sought an oral response is from MP Robinson to the Minister of the Cabinet.

MP.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good afternoon *[sic]*, Mr. Speaker, good afternoon colleagues and to the listening audience.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh!

An Hon. Member: Morning—you got up early.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 1: ELECTORAL REFORM WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the Electoral Reform Working Group, as the stated date for its formation was March 30, 2026?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for that question because this is a very important bipartisan topic that we are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I provided a full public update on the Government's electoral reform work, and I confirmed that while the March 30 target for forming the working group has passed, the work has still continued. The Ministry has used the additional time to strengthen the foundation of the group's work that includes further consultation, operational review, election experience surveys issued to members and

candidates, lessons from observing the recent general election in The Bahamas, and specialised policy preparation on campaign and election finance.

The working group is now ready to move to formal appointments. This group will include representation from the Parliamentary Registrar's Office, the Government, the Opposition, and young Bermudians supported with relevant and technical policy expertise. The target for tabling the legislation remains September 2026.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The scheduled timing for when this working group was going to be established was quoted as *imminent*. So, I just wanted to ask in my supplementary, Could the Honourable Minister provide a clearer timetable with a potential date as to when this working group will be appointed?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, as detailed yesterday, the appointment of the group is imminent. We will be sending out letters next week. It is anticipated that the group will be between 5 and 10 persons. We anticipate the work will take between four to six weeks, and we do intend to have a very aggressive timeline for how and when that group would meet and the typical milestones that we expect from them.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, I thank the Honourable Minister for that question [*sic*].

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Answer.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: For that answer, yes. Thank you, Deputy [Speaker].

[*Laughter*]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: First day back.

Can I ask a follow-up supplementary as to a bit more clarity as to the makeup of this potential electoral reform working group? I heard the Minister list a few things in the press conference, but I guess my supplementary is if those qualifications are not met, i.e., if people do not accept the invitation or people do not apply,

what then happens to the progress date of September 2026?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, the progress date of September 2026 remains, and we will adhere to forming this working group. If we do not get members . . . so, for example, if the Opposition does not nominate anyone, that will not stop us moving forward.

The Speaker: All right.

Those are your two supplementary questions.

The next written question that needs an oral response is also from MP Robinson.

MP, would you like to put your question to the Minister of Home Affairs?

QUESTION 2: LANDLORD AND TENANT ACT 2025, DRAFT BILL UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House on the state of the draft Bill, the Landlord and Tenant Act 2025, as consultation concluded October 31, 2025?

The Speaker: Something that may have been covered in the Statement this morning, but go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

I did endeavour to comprehensively provide an update to the public and to this House relating to the Ministry's status on the Landlord and Tenant [Act] and the associated reforms, and so it is imminent having just recently had Cabinet consider a second iteration of the policy's evolution.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It seems my parliamentary questions are getting scooped this time, with a press conference and a statement preceding them.

My supplementary for this question is, we heard again *imminent*, but could we have a prospective timetable for the listening audience and for us on when these reforms will be before the House of Assembly?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for the question. I recognise both to the public and also regarding the Honourable Member's question,

that it is something that the public is seeking to have delivered. And it is with full anticipation that we will follow the consultative process, ensuring that it's thoughtful. It is two large pieces of legislation that we are consolidating into a modern piece of legislation to match the current times of our housing and rental market, and so we do anticipate that it will be in June to be able to get to consultation and revise it thereafter.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary? No. Thank you.

Members, the next written question that seeks an oral response is from MP Robinson again, to the Minister of Works.

Minister, this is . . . go ahead. Proceed, MP Robinson.

QUESTION 3: GIBBS HILL LIGHTHOUSE, UPDATE ON UPKEEP AND MAINTENANCE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update regarding the upkeep and maintenance planned for the Gibbs Hill Lighthouse?

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, there's no press conference for this one—

[Laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: —or a statement.

The Ministry is currently carrying out maintenance works at Gibbs Hill Lighthouse as part of its ongoing preservation programme. Repairs to the lighthouse beacon are awaiting replacement of the roof, which is expected to take place during the painting contract for which we just closed an RFP.

Additional work to replace the railing with stronger and more durable fixtures will also take place at that time. It is important to note that the coordination of these projects is important, largely due to the scaffolding required. We want to make sure we have everything in hand ready and in order first. But minor maintenance is also being completed on the restaurant's fire alarm system. While a tenant remains in place, the reopening date will depend on the completion of the safety requirements and operational readiness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable Minister for that answer.

I just wanted to get a prospective, because I know a lot of moving pieces are happening, but a

prospective timeline . . . or could the Minister endeavour to provide a prospective timeline for this maintenance and upkeep? Because as the MP of the area I will be asked. So, if it is possible, I would appreciate it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Again, I completely understand, and I figured that was the root of the question. But, Mr. Speaker, [it is] very difficult to be boxing myself in and give a specific date, but I think it would be reasonable to assume that the works at the very beginning will start this summer.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, thank you for that.

My second supplementary is just regarding safety when it comes to the Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, as we had some unfortunate events transpire up there. Could the Minister highlight in these maintenance projects an increased . . . an increased . . . what's the word?

The Speaker: Security.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Security for the upper part of the lighthouse? Thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you. All right.

That brings us to a conclusion of the question there.

The next written question with oral response is from MP Linda Smith, again to the Minister of Works. MP Smith.

QUESTION 1: PENHURST PARK HORTICULTURE REMOVAL

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

Yes, accepting that casuarina trees are categorised as an invasive species, will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with the reason why Penhurst Park in Smith's Parish is now being cleared of several large old trees and other horticulture that has provided welcome cover and shade in that park, particularly on the western boundary fence line with the property that's owned by Link Bermuda?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: I want to thank the Honourable Member for her question.

Mr. Speaker, next week I will be meeting with environmental stakeholder groups, and I certainly would welcome their thoughts when they realise that the OBA is questioning why the Government is removing invasive species. Nonetheless, the removal of casuarina trees at Penhurst Park was undertaken as part of the department's ongoing management of Bermuda's parks and open spaces.

Casuarinas are recognised as an invasive species that can prevent native vegetation from growing and negatively impact the long-term health of the environment. Their removal is intended to support the gradual restoration of native plant life within the park. The trees removed were in a dense interior section of the park, away from the main recreational areas used by the public. This work was not connected to any development activity, but rather formed part of a responsible environmental management and park maintenance.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, and I just wanted to say that I think everybody is aware that casuarinas are an invasive species. I wasn't asking specifically about the invasive species, I am actually asking about the clearing of horticulture, particularly in connection with the fence line of Link Bermuda, and the anticipation that that is in relationship to equipment that will be going in on the Link Bermuda property, and that the park is being cleared for sight lines.

The Speaker: What was the question? What was your question?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: What is the question there?

Ms. Linda Smith: Is the park being cleared to accommodate equipment for Link Bermuda?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: I believe I gave a substantive response to the question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The action was because you are getting an invasive species out.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct. And what we're doing it for.

The Speaker: Okay.
Second supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you very much, and thank you to the Minister.

How long will this work be going on in terms of clearing the park, and what is it anticipated that . . . or how much clearing is anticipated in terms of the invasive species that will be coming out? And what is the timeline for that work?

The Speaker: You need to repeat a part of it? You good?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I repeat that this is part of the Parks ongoing management of Bermuda's parks and open spaces. So, the answer is that this is an ongoing process.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Those are your two supplementary questions. Would you like to move on to your next question?

QUESTION 2: MARINE POLLUTION COMPLAINTS

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House whether the Ministry has received any complaints, reports, or investigated any incidents relating to sewage, wastewater, discoloured water, or other possible marine pollution in the waters over the past six months, and what findings or actions resulted from those investigations?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and again, I thank the Honourable Member for her questions. I will say that complaints related to pollution on the sea are not reported to the Ministry of Public Works and Environment. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: No, thank you.

The Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Members, that brings us to the conclusion of answers to written questions. We will now move on, in the time that's left, to questions that have arisen out of the Statements that were given this morning.

And, Premier, your Statement on the constitutional reform has a question from MP King.
MP King.

QUESTION 1: CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED PROCESS FOR

Mr. Robert King: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker, Members of this Honourable House, and the listening public.

Regarding the proposed amendments and work that's going to be done on constitutional reform, would the Honourable Premier please inform the House what specific constitutional deficiency the Government believes exists within Bermuda's governance framework that requires constitutional reform?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will do my best to be polite, but given the line of questioning today, I am not in the mood.

The Honourable Member was the leader—

The Speaker: I know you know how to be big and rise above—

Hon. E. David Burt: I will.

The Speaker: Rise above—

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member was the Leader of the Opposition at the point in time when our Throne Speech was given in which it actually laid out what constitutional change the Government is seeking. So, I will refer the Honourable Member to the Throne Speech which was given, and the one prior.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: I am not in the mood to listen to you. How about that?

The Speaker: Supplementary? Supplementary?

An Hon. Member: Come on, man.

Mr. Robert King: Next question, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Next question.

QUESTION 2: CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED PROCESS FOR

Mr. Robert King: Will the Honourable Premier please state whether the proposed constitutional reform will include amendments regarding the powers of the Premier, Cabinet Authority, constitutional responsibilities to include the police, DPP, judiciary, and independent oversight bodies?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: If the Honourable Member would have read the Statement, he would know that we are consulting on the process. And there is an entire thing that is laid out where anyone, including him, will be able to make whatever suggestions he may wish to do so.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.
Supplementary?

An Hon. Member: Now we are moody.

[Laughter]

Mr. Robert King: Next question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 3: CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED PROCESS FOR

Mr. Robert King: Would the Honourable Premier please inform this Honourable House whether the reform proposals are intended to strengthen or reduce mechanisms for transportation . . . transparency, anti-corruption, and enforcement and public accountability? Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will refer the Honourable Member to the answer I gave moments ago.

The Speaker: Hmm.
Supplementary? Okay. Thank you.
That was the only question for that Statement. Premier, your second Statement also has questions. MP Campbell would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA'S FISCAL PROGRESS, INDEPENDENT RATING AGENCIES CONFIRM

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

Mr. Speaker, it is always good news when the rating agencies provide positive feedback. What I would like to know is, Is the Premier aware of any incidences where any Bermudian has been able to use positive credit ratings to buy food or medication?

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Seriously?

Another Hon. Member: Oh, my goodness.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the question does not deserve an answer. That is the reality. Because this is actually serious business, and an Honourable

Member like that who actually is supposed to run a local company should know better.

An Hon. Member: You should know better about—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The [Premier] is imputing improper motive on behalf of my colleague. And I would paraphrase, if you want to put my colleague's, you know, wording a different way, because of course we like to come and we like to make . . . we have to come here and at least get through the day sometimes with this Government, Mr. Speaker.

Clearly, my colleague's intent is that these financial ratings reflect only—only, Mr. Speaker—the capability of Bermuda to pay the people it borrows money from, of which it borrowed too much! So much, that we are a billion dollars in debt. And the Premier wants to pat himself on the back for paying the debt.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Take a seat.

Hon. E. David Burt: This . . . Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Take a seat. Take a seat. Take a seat.

Hon. E. David Burt: This continues.

The Speaker: Take a seat, take a seat, take a seat.
Take your seat. Take your seat.

Members, when you raise a point of order, it has to be specific to the comment that was made and not a dissertation on a different viewpoint of trying to support what was said. It has to be on the comment that was made. Okay?

You got a little leeway on that one.
MP Campbell, do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay. Can you put your supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Vance Campbell: Is the Premier . . . has he encountered anyone who has successfully used positive credit ratings to pay for rent or their mortgage?

The Speaker: I think that was similar to the line of your earlier question.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: Well, if—

The Speaker: The response to that basically is going to be that the ratings, as we all know, don't necessarily impact the line of questions that you are putting, which is what he was trying to respond to your earlier question, hoping that this time your question would change its tone.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, I am asking these questions with the purpose that the Government stands up and says *we are doing an excellent job* based on these credit ratings, and my questions are designed to see if those credit ratings—that positive performance—is actually impacting the people of Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, so I will answer the question of which the Honourable Member has asked. Because it is actually . . . for me and, Mr. Speaker, I have the right to express my opinion as a parliamentarian in the answer to the question. It is actually offensive and degrading of this Honourable House, the line of questioning that has come from Members of the Opposition today. That is my view and my opinion, Mr. Speaker. Because that Honourable Member knows clear well the impact that ratings agencies have inside of a jurisdiction. The Honourable Member is clearly aware of that. But he is rising and stooping to a level, in my opinion, that does not befit the Honourable Members of this House. So let me answer the question, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is—

Mr. Vance Campbell: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.
Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Vance Campbell: The Premier and Minister of Finance is imputing improper motive.

The Speaker: Well, based on, based on . . . let me make a comment so we don't go back and forth.

Based on the question that was put earlier, clearly the rating doesn't impact in the way that the question was asked. The rating states the standard of the country, or what the country is looking at, where the country rating has been, but not necessarily what the

impact of buying groceries is, to put it in my term, of what your first question was at.

The second . . . and so the tone that was sought was one that would speak to the impact of the rating itself or how the rating impacts Bermuda in its overall . . . because that's what the rating looks like, and not the individual.

Now, you want to respond to the . . .

Hon. E. David Burt: I am trying to finish answering the question, Mr. Speaker. That was a point of order—that he interrupted. I am not imputing improper motive.

He went on his line, and I am going to give my response. That's their favourite thing to say, imputing improper motive, because it's like they can't take it.

The Speaker: Don't, don't, don't, don't—sit down, Mr. Cannonier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You know I am going to get him on that.

The Speaker: It's just the line . . . that line, you can withdraw it. You started on a good road that time. You slipped one word in there. Just leave out that favourite line of which you just said. Leave that out, please.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they have had multiple occasions of where they say *imputing improper motive*. That is what they give. That's a factual statement, Mr. Speaker. That is what they do. So here we go, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is what they claim. But anyhow, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Standing Orders.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will wait because I want to make sure they can hear the question—

The Speaker: Speak to me.

Hon. E. David Burt: —the answer to the question they asked.

The Speaker: Speak to me. Yes, speak to me.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Go ahead. Speak to me.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will wait.

The Speaker: No, no. I am ready to hear it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

But I can't think because there's too much noise going on.

The Speaker: I know you can speak to me.

Several Hon. Members: Aw.

The Speaker: Look at me and speak directly to me. You can ignore that. Go ahead.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Just make sure they are ready to listen, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: They are listening. I am listening. That's the key. I am listening.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: I am listening.

Hon. E. David Burt: So here is the fact, Mr. Speaker. The question that was asked was regarding mortgage rates. The question that was asked was about food. In the Statement itself we talked about the fact that good financial performance allows us to give relief, reduce taxes, make sure that we can provide things such as mortgage guarantee programmes and other matters. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because we have strong and sound fiscal management. The Honourable Member knows that. He is just trying to cause issues.

[General uproar]

Hon. E. David Burt: He is trying!

The Speaker: All right. Keep it on the line.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: You see that? Don't worry. I have got my line and length. He is just trying, Mr. Speaker, and that's the reality.

The Speaker: All right.

Hon. E. David Burt: But everyone in this country knows that it is a good thing. The challenge that the Honourable Member has, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that this Government has now seen a credit rating increase when the party he has now joined presided over two

decreases in the country's credit rating. We are turning things around, and we are going to continue to press forward. And for that, Mr. Speaker, I think the entire country can be proud.

The Speaker: Any supplementary?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the Premier believes that I am asking these questions for the reason that he stated. However, I will just say that the Premier also knows that in spite of these ratings the average daily experience of Bermudians does not reflect a positive mood. And that's . . . I will finish with that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. We need a question. No question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: No question.

The Speaker: No question? Well . . . all right. Okay.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Okay. Members, we will now move on.

The next Statement that has a question is the statement from the Minister of Cabinet in reference to (his first Statement) in reference to the city vacancies. And that's from the Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: CITY OF HAMILTON GROUND FLOOR USE AND VACANCY SURVEY 2025

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I feel like I am walking on glass right now.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Keep your shoes on.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I was glad to hear that the occupancy *[sic]* dropped from 15 per cent to 10 per cent, which is a very positive thing. It is a great outlook going forward.

But I was just curious, and I am not sure if this is in the wheelhouse here, but for the Planning Department, and looking at the stats, has he noticed that there has been a reduction in the per square footage that people are paying in rent to help get these spaces filled? Would it be in that . . . yes, I wasn't quite sure. He did speak about Planning Department, and he is speaking about the relationship with the Corporation and the study that was done, and that they are occupying more space now, as opposed to before, from 15 [per cent] to 10 per cent. And I am just curious as to how we came about that. Maybe the landlords are reducing the rent to get people in. I don't know. But it may be out of his remit. I am not sure. But I was curious.

The Speaker: The question is, has the increase gone up as a result of . . .

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, has the decrease gone up—

The Speaker: Because of the cost of rent and square footage?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes.

The Speaker: Is it in Planning Department?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Is it qualified anywhere in the stats?

The Speaker: In his remit?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Is it in Planning's remit?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am just trying to find out, yes.

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

Mr. Speaker, that is data that doesn't appear to be captured in this particular report. What they did is, you go out and you compare how many places were occupied when you did it a few years ago to how many places are occupied now. And you say, today, more places are occupied than before. But in terms of how much it costs to rent those places, that is not part of the data captured.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I was looking for a trend.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary, or you're fine?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: You are fine?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am fine, yes, yes, yes.

The Speaker: Minister, for the same Statement, MP Tucker would like to put a question to you.

MP Tucker.

QUESTION 2: CITY OF HAMILTON GROUND FLOOR USE AND VACANCY SURVEY 2025

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

I guess my question is somewhat in the same vein as the [Opposition] Whip. I just wanted to know, Is the Government considering any kind of incentives for

retail to . . . such as tax relief, grants or anything like that, to encourage more occupancy? Obviously, the increase in the rental units is great, the percentages that were provided, or I should say the drop in the numbers. But are they considering any incentives? Thanks.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, Mr. Speaker, that is something that falls out of my remit. More probably likely a question aimed at the Ministry of Finance, that would be the one providing incentives like that, tax incentives.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Minister, there is one more Member who would like to put a question to you on this Statement, and that's MP Campbell.

MP Campbell.

QUESTION 3: CITY OF HAMILTON GROUND FLOOR USE AND VACANCY SURVEY 2025

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

I would like to ask the Minister, Having expanded the Approved Residential Scheme initiative to cover the entire city, can the Minister advise on any developments that have resulted from that, or the number of units that have been constructed as a result of that?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, this Statement didn't speak to the number of anyone seeking Planning permission for that. That is something that I could endeavour to find out. I will take this opportunity to say that the Planning Department has added to their website data statistics on the number of permits that are being processed, the number of building permits that have been processed, and the number of construction projects that have started. So, there's a comprehensive list of this actual data. It doesn't speak to the type, the exact project or where it is, but it does talk about the numbers, and perhaps the Member could glean some of that information from that particular set of statistics that have now recently been published on the website.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

[No Audio]

QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the launch of the portal is a great idea. I am very encouraged by some of the information that the Minister provided.

I would like to know what steps the Ministry will take, though, to ensure that seniors, low-income residents, and persons with limited digital literacy can access the portal. Is there going to be any training provided or anything like that to help people who might be in those instances?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

That is a very interesting question. It is something I actually hadn't given any thought to training for the website. It is pretty intuitive on there, but as I do get approached by persons [when] canvassing, there could be some difficulties navigating a website. And so, I will take that under advisement and find out from the IDT team if there is any way of providing any sort of guidance on that. I do know there has been a social media campaign to say, *here is the new website, here is where you can find things*, and that sort of stuff.

In terms of access, currently now the Bermuda National Library has free internet access for persons who wish to come and utilise. So those can be used as well. But I do know in other conversations we are having about using post offices and different stuff, but that will be subject to further statements later on in the year.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a second question. Thank you to the Minister for that answer.

My second question is, I am always concerned about cybersecurity. So, I do know the Minister did mention that he has an excellent team that has worked on the portal. I would like to know, though, if an independent pen[etration] test has been conducted, and if so, how often will they be conducted?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, thank you for that question. I don't have that data in front of me, but I do know those tests do take place, and I can endeavour to find out that information for you.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you. I would welcome the response. Thank you.

Third question.

QUESTION 3: GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

Ms. Robin Tucker: Third question has to do with accessibility standards. So, again, I thought it was great that the Minister did speak about the system being accessible.

I would like to just know whether the accessibility that the Minister spoke about meets the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines [WCAG] 2.0. So those are guidelines to ensure that people with disabilities, including those with visual, auditory, cognitive, and motor impairments, are able to access.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, a very topical question. I did speak to accessibility. I do not have the data to reply to that response. And I do request that the Member send me an email offline, and I will endeavour to answer those questions for her forthwith.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will email him. Thank you.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

QUESTION 1: NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY, CONSULTATIVE DRAFT, UPDATE ON

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My first question is, Can the Honourable Minister please provide a brief timetable as to when she anticipates that these reforms will come before this Honourable House for the National Electricity Policy?

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

So, the National Electricity Sector Policy will continue its consultation and end on the 21st of May. The Ministry will review the responses from both the public and the sectoral stakeholders, and then it becomes tabled in the House.

Following the tabling of the policy, that is then for the regulator to steward the implementation and use it to inform any future IRP planning, generation planning, et cetera.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Second question.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

QUESTION 2: NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY, CONSULTATIVE DRAFT, UPDATE ON

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Previously, the Government had made a pledge towards renewables and has now moved away from that pledge. I just wanted to ask whether or not LNG will now be considered in the potential National Electricity Policy now that the renewable timetables have been moved away from.

Thank you.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The National Electricity Sector Policy takes a technology agnostic approach. It is prioritising the consumer, affordability, reliability, and ensuring that we do have implementation of and deployment of technology that we know is viable in our context. We know we don't have to commission more studies that cost money to both the regulator, the utility, the department to review and refine because each of these surveys, each of these assessments cost more money to the average Bermudian. And so what we are trying to mitigate is focusing on affordability. So, the cost and specifically looking at LNG, the extent to which the research and the further cost will increase, that is what the priority has been shifted away from.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The reason that I brought up LNG and I guess my question would be . . . now because the infrastructure was built previously for LNG and because of the push for renewables it was pivoted away from, it was flagged as a potential cost saver for Bermudian households. So, I just would like to ask the Minister, could she endeavour to bring back to this Honourable House the potential of pursuing that particular energy source and research that has been conducted about it?

Thank you.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for his question again. I think it is a topical one and I will certainly bring information that has been brought to the attention of the department and the Ministry to the House and share it with him.

What I do know is that there was a private entity decision. It just so happens to be our incumbent utility that made a decision regarding the investment in technology, which was a dual fuel engine. But what shouldn't be ignored is the fact that for every purchase of technology there is also infrastructure, piping,

regasification that is required and not currently deployed. So, there is a portion of it that would suggest that it is eligible for LNG. However, the conversion is a year, there's infrastructure, piping. We already have the Honourable Minister of Public Works diligently working on our roads. And so, we are talking about unpacking roads and creating further pipelines to facilitate LNG, which is a costly enterprise.

So, while there may be specific private enterprise decisions that make it costly to run, there is public . . . and the ratepayer and the general public's pocket that we are trying to preserve.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION 3: NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY, CONSULTATIVE DRAFT, UPDATE ON

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Given the push for the affordability that I support as well with the Minister's priority on making energy more affordable for Bermudians, my question is, Has the National Electricity Policy taken into account the effect of [fewer] customers utilising electricity in our Island and how that will impact costs going forward?

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you . . . I . . . sorry. Thank you.

I definitely want to address a point that I also included in my Ministerial Statement and talked about the ministerial directive, which is actually also included in the contents of the Statement and the contents of the National Electricity Sector Policy (NESP). And that includes being able to explore models that would ensure that there are fair pricing structures to identify cost-saving opportunities. So, that looks at the way in which our current model is priced, Mr. Speaker, and also looks at the way in which further customers can be fairly dispersed [in] the pricing that it costs for electricity generation.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: No, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: No, Mr. Speaker, I think it was covered in the parliamentary question. Thank you.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

QUESTION 1: MEDICAL CANNABIS FRAMEWORK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a great Statement. I was glad to hear what the Minister had brought forward.

An Hon. Member: He said declare your interest.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Declare my interest?

[Laughter]

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, my goodness.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Whoo!

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes. I said it was a good Statement. I must have been partaking.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the question was for the doctors. He mentioned doctors and pharmacists. Is there a specific licence that will be required outside of their medical licence to be able to dispense these pharmaceuticals?

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question from the Honourable Member, but I did have in my Statement that no additional licences will be needed by medical practitioners.

The Speaker: You just have to be a registered doctor or pharmacist.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: You just have to be a registered doctor or pharmacist, yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, that was the part that was missing, because there's a lot of doctors, right? So, we can say doctors, but it didn't say medical doctor or anything. Because you have got doctors in all kinds of alternative medicine and the likes. And I am not sure if that's going to be included. That's why I was asking the question.

An Hon. Member: Dr. DeCouto.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, maybe if the Minister knows that.

An Hon. Member: You want to make sure Dr. DeCouto—

An Hon. Member: Dr. DeCouto—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Or that a naturalist can just go ahead and do it as well, because that's part of the problem that we are having, right? So, the other part is in—

An Hon. Member: Natural doctors.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes. That is what I wanted to clarify. So, the other part is that the mix—

[Timer chimes]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Time?

The Speaker: For those listening, that takes up the 60-minute allotment for questions this morning.

So, we have to conclude here, even though we hadn't got through all the questions that were listed on the Order Paper . . . or that Members wanted to put to the Statements. But time determines when that period ends. It is now the end of that 60-minute period.

We have about two minutes left on the clock before we were to rise for the reset . . . for the lunch period.

Premier, I am going to ask that we rise now and take that extra two minutes now, unless there are any objections.

Any objections? No.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn for lunch and return at 2:00 pm.

The Speaker: Thank you

I already asked if there were no objections to us rising. So, we now rise for the lunch period and will return at 2:00 pm.

Members, the House now stands adjourned until 2:00 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:28 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:08 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. I trust we all had a nice lunch break, and now we can resume business today. So, the House is now in session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: When we stopped this morning . . . When we stopped this morning, we had the completed

the question-and-answer period. So now [we will move on.]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Does any Member wish . . .

MP Swan, I see you jumped up real quick down there.

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead. You have your three minutes.

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

It is with deep sadness that I rise to offer condolences to the family of the late Florence (Flo) Gibbons from Mullet Bay [Road], St. George's, my dear friend. Mr. Speaker, when you come into St. George's, you will see the colourful bottles, blue and blue, always decorated, someone sitting in the yard . . . they are hailing folks, always accommodating. The matriarch of the family passed away. I lost a friend. And I am very saddened that I was overseas when they funeralised her. I was able to write a tribute, but I wanted to rise and lend my voice in this House to let folks know that one of our dear . . . my dear constituent and friend passed away. She kept her family as a tight-knit unit and was embracing to me and involved me in events that let me know what was going on with the family. I always was appreciative of her throughout my years of being involved in politics in the East End.

On a happier note, Ms. Leona Thompson, who was once in constituency 2, who now lives in constituency 1, at the rest home there, celebrated 109 years of being on this earth and still being very lucid indeed. I know I can associate the Member from constituency 1 with congratulations to her. I have a very nice picture of her and her great niece Janice, the great golfer Robinson—she was when we were young juniors from the Robinson family of St. George's. And also Mr. Scott Stallard, who she virtually raised, is always very close knit to that family as well—all from St. George's.

And I had the honour of being invited to the 90th birthday of my dear friend, Winslow Wayne Scott, Bronky Minors, a well-known person in the horse trade, certainly known for the many shows he entered and the awards he won in the equestrian arena. And his grandchildren have gone on to carry that forward as well.

And finally, I would like a commendation given to Lodge St. George 200 on the Grand Royal of Scotland. I have witnessed these young brethren take and modernise the Peppercorn Ceremony to it becoming an international cultural event.

[Timer chimes]

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would any other Member [like to make a contribution]?

MP Lister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I mean good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker it has been some time since we sat in this House, so I do have a number of condolences and congratulatory remarks to be made. So please bear with me as I try not to speed through them.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to send condolences to the family of a constituent of mine, Mr. John James Albert Van-Lowe. I associate MP Weeks, MP DeCouto, and MP Richardson. He was a long-time servant in the Bermuda Regiment.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family of Mr. Floyd Forth, Jr. I knew him from—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Associate me, too.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I associate MP Kim . . . I will associate the whole House.

I knew him from around the Somerset community and in my early years of serving on the Somerset Cricket Club management. He also served on there.

I also like to send condolences to the family of Ms. Linda Hodgson. I knew her for many years working at Butterfield Bank and was very saddened to hear that she had passed.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I associate the whole House also.

Mr. Speaker, [I would] also like to send condolences [regarding] a friend of mine, Shauntia Zuill. I am very shocked to hear of her passing. She was a young person just a few years older than me. I was very shocked to find out that she passed. I want to send condolences to her family.

And then lastly to a relative of ours, Mr. Erskine “Johnny” Binns. I associate MP Tyrrell. He is his constituent, but he is our family member.

So again, to all these families I would like to send condolences. It is always sad to lose a family member no matter what age or circumstance.

Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note I would like to recognise two constituents. A constituent of mine who races powerboats, Mr. David Selley, along with Mr. Steven Bridges. They finished first place in their maiden victory of professional powerboat racing in St.

Petersburg's Powerboat Grand Prix back in March. So, congratulations to them.

Also, to young Mr. Miles Outerbridge who represented Bermuda well in the CARIFTA Games, who won first place in the Under-20, 100 metres, setting a new record. And then he won second . . . I will associate the whole House. And then he won second place in the Under-20, 200 metres. So again, these are Bermudians representing Bermuda well, punching above their weight on an international stage.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, talking about an international stage, I would like to send congratulations to the producers—and you included—of the Clyde Best documentary. Clyde Best, his name—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —and I associate the whole House. His name is synonymous with professional football in the UK by being the first Black professional football player. And coming from a small Island, Bermuda, we should be proud that we produced a person of that stature. And again, congratulations to the producers of that documentary and again to Mr. Clyde Best.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

MP Richardson.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise and echo my honourable colleague's condolences to Sergeant Major Van-Lowe's family. And I would be remiss if I did not contribute to his condolences. Sergeant Major Van-Lowe was quite a remarkable man. I remember my daddy was in band, and so he spent a lot of time up camp, so to speak. He was always one of the uncles (as it were) for us young men up Warwick camp. And later on when it became my turn to serve and others—all of our turns to serve—he then became more of a mentor. But Sergeant Major Van-Lowe was not known for holding his tongue. So you were always well apprised of what he thought of you and your contributions at that time. Sergeant Major Van-Lowe had more than a few meetings with me. He was good friends with my father, and I will miss him incredibly.

One of the funny parts of coming to know someone in the Regiment, Mr. Speaker, is you rarely know someone's first name, and so I did not know Sergeant Major's first name was James. And then I did . . . Then I learned at his funeral that it is John. But Sergeant Major Van-Lowe will be missed in the clarinet section. He was born a boy, raised a man, but forged a soldier, and he will be missed amongst us who had the pleasure to serve.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member . . . Minister Rabain.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family of Mr. Harold Minors—

The Speaker: Oh, yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —who has recently passed, and I would like to associate the entire House. If people knew Harold from the [Pembroke] Youth Centre, which is where I knew him, I worked with Harold. It shows a testament to his longevity. I worked with Harold at the Youth Centre when I was, I believe, 15 and 16. And even so many years later I would see him, he would still be as joyful and just friendly as ever. So many of our young people have come through that Youth Centre in the last 40 years since I worked there, and all of them virtually would say, *I knew Harold*. I remember having a conversation with one of the young people who were there when I was a counsellor and I said, *Well, did you hear that Harold passed?* And they were like just devastated

So, I am looking forward to his celebration of life on Saturday. I have been told that there will be a block party on Angle Street where they will block off the street and allow a party to come out of that building. I do hope that there is some consideration of [memorialising] him in some tangible way perhaps naming part of the Youth Centre, and the like, because of the impact that he did make in the lives of so many young Bermudians that came through the Youth Centre as a place where they could go and seek advice, hang out for the summers, hang out after school, and have strong figures, and in this case, a strong Black male figure that they can look up to, Mr. Speaker. And again, I see association. I did say associate the whole House.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I did say associate the whole House with those condolences, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Pearman, would you like your three minutes?

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Mr. Scott Pearman: My colleague, MP Richardson, just observed how in the Regiment you never know someone's first name. Well, it is really not until you see the obituary that you might learn someone's middle name, and I stand today for Mr. Floyd Forth, Jr. whose middle *[sic]* name (as I did not know) was Eustace. No one called him Eustace. He was a prominent member

of the One Bermuda Alliance. He was in our caucus. He was a regular attendee. He drove taxi. And he was a charming man who was always friendly, always had a smile on his face, offered his opinions, someone . . . I am . . . I think I am hearing . . . Was that MP Swan? Associate? Yes, MP Swan. I thought I heard . . . Yes. And indeed, I would just like to recognise him and his passing. As I was about to say, he always had a smile on his face. He always had an opinion, but he offered it lightly and jovially and was a lovely, lovely man. And I know we will miss him. And I will associate MP Swan per his request.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King. You are a little slow there.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and Members of the Honourable House, and the listening public.

I wish to extend condolences to the family of Mr. Nathaniel Holder of East Point Lane who passed earlier this month, and my thoughts and prayers are with the family at this difficult time.

On a lighter note, Ralph Scott, Jr., the young Bermudian basketball player, is graduating from high school and in September will be going to the University of Tennessee to play college basketball and potentially have a future career in the NBA. So, congratulations go out to Ralph Scott, Jr., and his family.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Minister, you jumped pretty quickly that time. You have your three minutes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Good morning.

The Speaker: Yes, all right.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I am learning. I am learning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to rise and give nod and celebrate the occurrence of the Delta Days, and the attendance of those who attended the Gallery this morning, and also those who are present this afternoon, noting and recognising that [I] do not often wish or adorn or come to Parliament in red, but I do honour the work, the civic action,—

[Laughter]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —that day in and day out they do by way of the Delta GEMS initiatives that they have, by way of the [Delta] Pantry that they also have. So, Delta GEMS is around mentorship. The Pantry gives funds to those who are in need. And so I do want to celebrate their efforts. Bermuda Delta Days at

Parliament actually mirrors a US-based Delta Days UN and Delta Days at the national capital, which is in [Washington] DC. And so I wanted to honour their efforts to engage in both understanding the parliamentary procedure, parliamentary process, and also how we as parliamentarians conduct ourselves here in the House. And so, I want to give credence to their efforts and give them a nod and shout out today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister Weeks, you have your three minutes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you.

I would like to start off by saying I would like to be associated with the remarks for Harold Minors. I was one of those Pembroke youth that was raised around the Pembroke Youth Centre, so I remember when Harold was there with the patriarch Sammy Wilson. Harold played a pivotal role in a lot of our lives when he was working at the Pembroke Youth Centre. So, my heart and prayers go out to his wife, Carmen, and his children.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to be associated with remarks for James Van-Lowe. I cannot remember his Regiment title, but along with the MP from [constituency] 3, we all went to [The] Berkeley [Institute] together. We all were schoolmates. So, what you guys saw as a man in the Regiment, we had the pleasure of seeing him as a little teenager at Berkeley. And trust me; he did not change. He was that same person that you guys met in the Regiment. That is who we knew as a fellow Berkeleyite. So, my thoughts and prayers go to his family from mine.

And on a lighter note, I would like to be associated with remarks for Delta. I am . . . I have the privilege of being married to one of the illustrious Delta GEMS. They think they are called—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —and—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —I . . . So she's not a gem? So, mine is a gem.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, yes. Let's be clear. Yes, all right. So . . . so . . . Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Let me be clear. However, they may . . . It may be mentioned other ways, but to me—

An Hon. Member: She is a gem.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —she is a . . . she is a gem.

An Hon. Member: All right!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: All right. So, having said that—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —I will take my seat.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Hey, hey, I know you like peace in your house when you go home.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: All right. There you go.
Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. Thank you and good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: On condolences, we have lost two cricketers actually. I spent a lot of time playing cricket with them. One will be probably a shock to everyone and that is Ken Pitcher, a Cup Match player, who—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes, yes, . . . Just, yes . . . Just lost him.

And I can remember, typically when they bring out a different ball once lost . . . you know, they bring out a selection for you to pick. And this time I was playing against Ken and I was third bat up. He was still opening, and he picked . . . Well, let me just say this here. He clean bowled me. And I take pride in not getting clean bowled.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You can catch me out. Come to find out—

The Speaker: The right ball. Right ball.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —when we took a break . . . when we took a break, he was using an illegal ball.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: He knew how to get you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The ball that you train with for swings—

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —is the ball that he was using. And nobody could figure out what was going on. But anyhow, to his family, . . . his . . . and to his sister, Darlene, condolences to the Pitcher family. You know, he was . . . He was a great . . . He was very impactful in the arena of cricket, and so it is sad to see at such a young age that he has moved on.

And I associate myself with Harold. I played a lot of cricket with Harold Minors, coming on, and I used to go to the centre as well with him to play ping-pong. I did not know that he was a pretty good ping-pong player. And so, we East End guys used to come up—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh yes. We used to come up and play against him a lot, but he was also . . . A funny story with him in cricket was he was opening bat . . . [He was] strong as an ox, too. This guy was strong. But his motto was, *You either get me, or I am gonna get you.* And it was all swing. There . . . There was no forward. *I'm gonna control this and contain this.* It was swing. And when he hit you, it went from Devonshire to St. David's, the ball.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So again, this is . . . This is . . . This is just a great guy in the community that we have all had an opportunity to embrace and to be a part of. So, it really is sad to the family. You know, condolences certainly go out, as the Honourable Minister already gave, [from] the whole House to lose such community-centred people who made a difference in a lot of lives, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I am off from one Whip to the other Whip. How is that?

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You messed him up. He cannot even get the microphone on now.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: All right. It's on now. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for elevating me there. Thank you. Good afternoon, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, having already been associated with some of the obituaries that I heard. I do want to say something little about three of them, having had

connection with them in the past. The first one was Johnny Binns. Johnny Binns was actually one of my constituents. Johnny had a funny personality if any of you knew him.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: And when I have my—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: I will associate you, Minister Rabain.

When I had my monthly . . . When I had my monthly clinics, [the] first Saturday of every month down at the Warwick Post Office, he would always come down—always. If no one else came, I could always count on Johnny being there. And we would have a joyous two hours sitting there just chatting, because he had stories. He had some real stories. So, I really want to send my condolences to his family.

The second one was Sergeant Van-Lowe who was actually in the Regiment around the same time—well, my son was in the Regiment, supposed to be around the same time that he was. And that is how I got to meet him because he always was telling me about things that my son did in the Regiment, and I always found him to be a very, very gentle man. And I used to see him when he came to visit his family in my constituency.

And the third one is Mr. Harold Minors. I have to say something about him. I lived right next door to the Pembroke Youth Centre on Angle Street, and he was the first person who showed me table tennis skills. You can call it ping-pong if you like, but it is table tennis. And I tried to . . . I tried to emulate him, but there was no way that I could emulate him. But he was a definitely a great male figure on . . . [in] the Angle Street area. All the guys who lived on Union Street, Princess Street—we all went out to the Youth Centre and came into contact with either him or Mr. Sammy Wilson, who has also passed as well.

But on a happier note, Mr. Speaker, we always hear bad things about young people here in Bermuda. I do not think enough of their good things are published or talked about, and I have three examples here that tell me that Bermuda is in safe hands. And I want to start off by sending congratulations to Mr. Jediah Cumbermack, who is the great nephew of one of my constituents. He is a cycle . . . a cycle power . . . power cycle rider, and he actually secured a podium spot in the British Superbike Championship recently. So, I just wanted to congratulate him.

The next one I would like to congratulate is Anais Godfrey. He is the son of one of my constituents, Alaire and Andre Godfrey on Warwick Lane. And he has graduated with a BA in music technology but now wants to go on to—

[Timer chimes]

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: That cannot be for me Mr. Speaker. Three minutes already?

The Speaker: Yes, sir.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Wow. Okay.

The Speaker: You got a big . . . You got a big note in front of you.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Well, I will finish up next week. Don't worry. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
I am going to lay this first.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: MP Tucker, you have the floor.

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

First of all, I just would like to say I attended the SailGP event on Sunday, and I thought it was absolutely fantastic. So—

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Robin Tucker: —again, thank you to all the organisers. It was great; good coverage for Bermuda.

Second is I would like to congratulate everyone, every group, department, [and] Ministry that has been involved in the Youth Mental Health Week, which is this week. And today is the last day for that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Okay. I would like to associate Minister Owen Darrell who is waving his green tie at me [that] he has worn in honour of Youth Mental Health Week this week. And—

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Oh. I would associate everyone in the room.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: So—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Robin Tucker: —Okay.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, I am associating the whole House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right.

Ms. Robin Tucker: The second, . . . The two things that I want to mention in relation to Youth Mental Health Week is that I had the opportunity to attend two events that they held. One was the . . . There was a debate that the young people had and the motion (interestingly enough) was "This House believes that a child's right to privacy when accessing health services outweighs a parent's right to be informed." The debate was absolutely awesome. And so, it really highlighted the depth of study and a preparedness that our young people had to have to actually have this debate. It was hosted by the Mirrors [programme] under the Department of Child and Family Services, and led by the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors and in partnership with the Youth Advisory Board. It was an excellent, excellent debate.

I just want to quickly name off the participants. So, the acting speaker for the for the debate was Christopher Jackson [and] Levi Masters. I may be mispronouncing these names, so if they ever hear this, please forgive me. Narayan Mangar, Aiden Herrick, Kylen Richards, Joy Yammine, Danette Davis, [and] Amira Trump. And the two teams were the Proposition and the Opposition teams, which . . . as I said, the debate was really, really good.

And then last night I was able to attend a parent panel discussion on raising resilient teens that was hosted by Bermuda Is Love at BUEI [Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute]. And again, what that did was provide parents and caregivers with tools to help their teens that might be, you know, dealing with some mental health challenges. So again, [it was a] fantastic week of events, and congratulations to everyone involved.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP DeCouto, would you like your three minutes?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like my three minutes.

I would like to send good luck. We have a team of young sailors and the Bermuda Optimist Dinghy Association travelling to Halifax this weekend to take part in the [Optimist] North American Championships. So, I hope that they do not get too cold up there and that they have a good experience and represent the Island well.

An Hon. Member: It's warmer than here.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, it may be. It may be warmer there.

The other thing is, I tend to walk a lot on the eastern end of Reid Street, and some of you will probably notice there has been a lot of construction there on the sidewalk. Sometimes we can think that the sidewalk just, you know . . . magically shows up. It just gets built. But if you sort of pay attention to it, you can see there is quite a lot of thought and detail that gets put into it and quite a lot of craftsmanship. And I—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and I think it is important that we do . . . You know, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we . . . We always speak about the lofty topics here, but I just wanted to put a celebration and a thank you to the craftsmen and the workers of the City of Hamilton for the excellence that they bring to creating a piece of infrastructure that will probably be there for hopefully another 100 years that many, many Bermudians—and many in this room I know enjoy the facilities in Hamilton—will use without even thinking, as they pass over with their feet, [about] the skills and the work that went into it. And I know we talk a lot in this House about labour shortages and da, da, da, da, dah, but I just want to say sometimes you just have to take some enjoyment in the little things that you see—or not-so-little things—and appreciate the work and care and skills that went into it. And I want to thank them for bringing those skills to the piece of infrastructure we use every day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Darrell, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity during my three minutes to congratulate one of Bermuda's premier filmmakers, and that is Mr. Milton Raposo of Method Media. He has completed a documentary commissioned by the Department of Culture on Ms. Ruth E. Thomas, MBE. I have had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to have a sneak peek of this documentary, and I must say it is a touching tribute that will be premiered over the weekend. And it will be launched for the broader public to see next week—obviously a fitting time to do this as we are in Heritage Month and we are in the lead next week to Bermuda Day. This is an incredible feat for Mr. Raposo and it is one of those films that will continue to preserve our cultural traditions.

And as we know, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say a little bit about (and not to give away) Ms. Ruth Thomas, MBE. She was known as a tireless warrior for culture. She was a Berkeleyite. I have to put that in there because she does say that The Berkeley was a

school that had the greatest influence on the direction that her life would take. And Ms. Thomas, you know . . . cultural roots still run deep into our society. She was Bermuda's first cultural department head, and our current director of culture, Ms. Carlita Lodge, worked under Ms. Ruth Thomas as an apprentice. And she credits the current cultural apprenticeship programme that we have where many individuals have their culture so we can preserve it . . . and getting that idea from Ms. Ruth Thomas.

So, as we lead up to our holiday, I want to once again congratulate Milton, and I want to say that everyone should view this film next week when it becomes available because as we all know Ms. Ruth Thomas worked "For the Culture."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Linda Smith.

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

I wanted to extend condolences to the family of Earl Leader who passed away this week after a long illness. Earl was known as a great tennis player. He was the tennis pro at the Southampton Princess, and I have gotten to know him a lot over many years of playing tennis at the Southampton Princess. He would give me tips from time to time. They never really sunk in, and I was never particularly great—

An Hon. Member: Associate the House.

Ms. Linda Smith: Associate the House? Yes, I will associate the House with that.

But he always made me feel better about my tennis game than I deserved, for sure. And he was also a very talented musician. He would play many times at the Southampton Princess and in other venues. A very talented, kind, genuine man—he will be missed by many.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other . . . MP Dill.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the Members of this House and the listening audience.

I would like to first of all start by extending condolences to the family of Darlene Bascome Emery.

[Inaudible interjection]

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: I would like to associate MP Kim Swan and MP Robin Tucker—

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —as well as the Premier and MP Diallo Rabain, Minister Rabain.

I would like to say that Darlene, she was an amazing lady. She was a long-time lecturer at the Bermuda College in the Department of Business Studies, and she was also a charter member of the first and finest sorority, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated—

[Inaudible interjections]

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —which I had the pleasure of joining with 23 other women to be charter members of that organisation. She also . . . one of the things that she did just last year, Darlene, she . . . I have a member who happens to be in the long-term care unit in the hospital, and all of a sudden I started receiving emails. There were all sorts of wonderful things happening, and I was wondering what was going on behind the scenes. And it was because Darlene had stepped forward. She had become the secretary of the Patient and Family Advisory Council, and she had wonderful ideas. Up until the time she took sick in late February, she just gave excellent service to that department of the hospital. And we just thank her for her life and certainly give our condolences to her children and our love to them. Thank you very much.

I would also like to take this opportunity right now and give commendation to Reverend Cyril Simmons and his wife Sister Regina Simmons who led in the National Day of Prayer, which took place on May 7. And I will associate the entire House with that. We would like to thank the Members of the House who were a part of that initiative because certainly the Bible tells us that “blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.” The day began with a proclamation from the Premier, which was read by the Speaker of the House, and we thank him for his presence there. And we certainly encourage all of us to commend them on the work that they have done and let us continue as a community to pray without ceasing.

Last and not least, I would like to give commendation to the Community Restoration Group under the leadership of Ms. Von-Rica [Dickenson]—

[Timer chimes]

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Next time. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to . . . Opposition Leader. You have your three minutes on the clock.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give condolences to the family of Charles Ambrose Johnson known as “Mickey” Johnson. He passed away earlier this week. He was the oldest . . . [I] associate MP Swan. Also, [I] associate the Minister of [Tourism and Transport,

Culture and] Sport. He was the oldest living Olympian. He competed for Bermuda in 1952. And I want to send condolences to his family because I know that they are grieving at this time. It is always important for us to make sure that we are giving the messages for somebody who had represented Bermuda on the highest stage. So, condolences to the family.

Thank you.

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

MP Simmons.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Very good timing. Look at that!

Mr. Scott Simmons: Good afternoon, colleagues. How are you this afternoon?

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this House and ask that I be associated with comments that have already been made as it relates to the passing of, first of all, Mr. Floyd Forth. Floyd was a good friend of mine. Mr. Speaker, what does occur is that many times when individuals are associated with individual political parties, we tend to not want to be seen with them, or we try to limit the time that we spend with them. But Floyd enjoyed both sides of the political divide. He was unselfish in his view, and we appreciate him for the man that he was and for the way that he conducted his affairs. And so, we are all the better for it [because of] him.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I want to mention, I believe it is Mr. Manfred Focke, [Sr.] in his passing more recently. I just wanted to speak to his family and let them know that we are thinking of them, that we care about them, and that we love them. The loss of a loved one is a serious matter, and it really helps when individuals support them in that effort.

And I ask to be associated with another one that I did hear. And I do believe we have already been put into the House.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Simmons.

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

Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I wish to associate myself with condolences offered by the Honourable Member for constituency 28, the Junior Minister of Justice, to the late Linda May Hodgson and of course the mother of one of my constituents, Mr. Lloyd Smith, the President of the Bermuda Cricket Board.

I would also like to associate myself, Mr. Speaker, with the condolences that were also offered to the family of the late Floyd Forth. Despite the fact that on clearly different political sides, a split-mixed

family, someone who I think the Honourable Member [who] just took his seat [said] was unselfish in sharing his particular views on a particular topic . . .

Mr. Speaker, also on a sad note, I would like to ask that a letter of condolence be sent to the family of the late Rudolph Edwin Lawrence.

The Speaker: Hmm. I didn't know.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes. Oh, you do not know? Rudy—yes, he passed. One of my constituents passed, I want to say, late last month, and he was without question a constituent who for me was very unselfish in giving me his views anytime when I went to go canvass his house. But he was a former cricketer, played an instrumental role coming out of Flatts, but also on the Bermuda Cricket Board of Control as it was known back at the time, serving as vice president, a former prison officer. And in addition to that, not only was he known for his sporting endeavours, but he also gave back to the young people of this community. And his connection in the founding of the Mirrors programme out of the time when I think you were certainly Minister and probably instrumental in those particular items, Mr. Speaker, is an important part of his legacy. And that programme has helped many young Bermudians with direction, discipline, and [to] go on a better path and still, of course, Mr. Speaker, continues to this day. So, I would ask that a letter of condolence be sent to his family. He passed away in his 94th year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it falls to me, because I refuse to allow it not to be recognised, that I will make sure that I stand up in this Honourable House. I am uncertain if it was done by the Minister of National Security, but I certainly would ask that a letter of congratulations be sent to a football team which resides in my constituency known as the Western Stars Sports Club. Known as the Dandy Town Hornets, [it] is the football team that has won yet another Premier League title.

The Speaker: It looks like you are getting help from somebody there.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also ask that a letter be sent to the North Village Community Club on their FA Cup victory, one more time of where I had to receive them.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Education, I wish to extend my congratulations to all of the Bermuda College graduates. I was pleased to attend the graduation ceremony yesterday, and it was lovely.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. E. David Burt: Although they were inside because of showers of blessings, it was great to see so

many young people, including, Mr. Speaker, if you could give me 10 more seconds, so many Bermudians who were part of the College Promise Programme, enabling them to ensure that they got their education at Bermuda College.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment? None other?

Before we move on, I want to do what is sort of out of the ordinary for me. I normally do not give condolences [for] people who are not amongst us in the Island, but as you know, I sit on the executive for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) for the Caribbean region. And when I travel in those meetings, there is normally a group of secretaries who travel with us at the different meetings. One was a young lady, and I always get her name. It is Marisa Dobson, 36 years old, a mother of three, and was sitting in church two weeks ago and just died in church.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no.

The Speaker: Sudden. She had an aneurysm right there in church. Her Parliament gave a recognition to her last week before they funeralised her at the end of the week, and because of what she has done for . . . in my role that I play, I just wanted to have our Parliament recognise her as well. It was extremely sudden as she leaves three young children, and I am sure our hearts can feel a loss like that to her family. But she was sitting there with her family in church and had an aneurysm and died in church. So, I would just like to note it here that our Parliament has given recognition to her for the service that she has given to me and my role that I play on the executive. Thank you.

Moving on.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: There is one on the Order Paper. We may have . . . You have the second one?

Hon. E. David Burt: We may have one later today, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am going to ask the indulgence of the House. There is a second Bill we are trying to get on the Order Paper and may . . .

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: It will be for a third reading, Mr. Speaker, if we can, after the third reading today, but I will do this one.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

BILL

FIRST READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that may be placed in the Order Paper for the next day of meeting, and this is the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you.
There are no other Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There is a notice of a motion by the Premier as well.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
For the third time, I shall read this motion in this Honourable House and look forward to the debate.

TAKE NOTE MOTION

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HISTORIC LAND LOSS IN BERMUDA TAKE NOTE OF REPORT

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I propose to move the following motion at the next day of meeting, that this Honourable House take note of the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Losses in Bermuda laid for the information of this Honourable House to Assembly on the 10th of December 2021.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[There are] no other motions. We now move on to the main business of the day, so to speak.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: We now get to the Orders of the Day, and we have one order to deal with today. That is the second reading of the Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Public Works and Environment.

Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to open the debate on the Bill entitled the Single-Use Plastics Act 2026.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to begin not with legislation but with the scene that many of us will recognise. Early one evening, just before sunset, I walked along one of our beaches with my daughter. The water was calm. The horizon was clear. It was the kind of evening that reminds you why Bermuda is one of the most beautiful places in the world. But as I looked closer along the high-water mark, mixed in with the seaweed were fragments of plastic, including bottle caps, broken pieces of containers, and small bits worn down by the ocean. And what struck me the most was that many of these pieces were not new. They had been here for some time, broken down, weathered and reduced, but not gone, Mr. Speaker, because plastic does not disappear. And that is the challenge before us.

Mr. Speaker, the scale of this issue cannot be ignored either. Every year, approximately 11 million tonnes of plastic enter our oceans. It is the equivalent of a garbage truck of plastic being dumped into the sea every single minute. It is also key to note that half of all plastics produced are used once and discarded, and less than 10 per cent has ever been recycled.

And here in Bermuda, we are not immune. Microplastics are accumulating on our beaches and throughout our marine ecosystem. Much of the plastic that reaches our shores originated somewhere else, yet we are the ones who must live with the consequences.

As organisations like Beyond Plastics Bermuda have highlighted, this issue is not just about the environment. It is about our human health as well, as microplastics are now being found in our water, our food, and increasingly in our bodies. It is about our economy, as our tourism product depends on clean beaches and a healthy marine environment. And it is about our responsibility. As a small Island in the middle

of the Atlantic, already experiencing the effects of climate change, it is critical that we be the change we wish to see.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is our response. Not a sudden or disruptive response, but a structured, responsible, and deliberate one. This Bill does not impose an immediate blanket ban on all single-use plastics. Instead, it establishes the legal framework that allows Bermuda to transition away from the most harmful single-use plastics over time through consultation, evidence, and a phased approach.

At its core, the Bill provides the Minister with the ability to prohibit specific single-use plastics by adding them to a schedule, but only where viable and cost-effective alternatives exist. It is important to note that this safeguard is fundamental. No item can be prohibited unless the Government is satisfied that businesses and consumers have practical alternatives available. And even then, there are built-in timelines to allow for adjustment.

Mr. Speaker, I am also aware that some may look at this Bill and point to the empty Schedule and suggest that it lacks substance. So allow me to address that directly. The Schedule is empty by design. This legislation is about putting the framework in place first, ensuring that when we act, we do so based on evidence, consultation, and real-world conditions.

The Ministry of Public Works and Environment is fully aware that there has already been significant consultation over several years. That engagement has directly informed the structure and safeguards within this Bill. The consultation that follows is not repetition; it is progression. Simply put, our prior consultation shaped the policy, and the upcoming consultation will shape the implementation.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear about the immediate plan going forward. Subject to the passage of this Bill, the Ministry intends to commence formal consultation within 60 days. That consultation is expected to run for approximately 8 to 12 weeks, after which the Ministry will bring forward the first item or items to be added to the Schedule.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to explain in practical terms how this will work. When the Government proposes to prohibit a specific single-use plastic, a notice of intention must first be published. That notice will outline the item being considered, the proposed restriction, and the alternatives available. From that point, there is a minimum six-month period where businesses, importers, and the public will have the opportunity to provide feedback, identify challenges, and suggest improvements. Only where viable and cost-effective alternatives exist can a prohibition order be made. Once that order is made, a further six-month transition period begins. So, in practical terms, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at at least 12 months between notice and full implementation. This ensures clarity, fairness, and predictability.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take this opportunity to clarify a few things. The first is that this legislation is focused primarily on commercial activity. It regulates the importation, sale, and supply of single-use plastics, not personal use of single-use plastics. Items already in personal possession are not the target of enforcement. The Bill also goes beyond importation. Once an item is prohibited, it cannot be imported, sold, or supplied commercially, ensuring it is removed from circulation.

Mr. Speaker, decisions on what to prohibit will not be arbitrary. They will be guided by the director of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, informed by consultation, and based on whether alternatives are both available and reasonably affordable.

It is also important that the system remains flexible. If it is demonstrated that alternatives are not viable, there is a process to review and even remove items from the prohibited list.

Mr. Speaker, this will be a phased approach. We will begin with items that are widely recognised as low-impact and easily replaceable and then move to more complex items over time. And we will support businesses through that transition.

I am pleased to confirm that the Minister of Finance has agreed to provide customs duty relief on approved alternatives, helping to reduce costs. Details of this duty relief will be finalised through the upcoming consultation and made public before any items are prohibited.

Mr. Speaker, I have also heard concerns over the quality of alternative options, and so I would like to take this opportunity to remind the public that the quality of alternative options is improving. There are now products made from plant-based or other materials that closely replicate the look, feel, and function of traditional plastics. The transition we are proposing today is more practical than ever before.

Mr. Speaker, this is how responsible governments operate. We set the direction. We engage the stakeholders. We phase the implementation. And we support the transition.

And so, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I return to that evening on the beach. What I saw there was not the result of one moment but the accumulation of countless small choices over time. Today we begin to change that. Not all at once, but deliberately. Not disruptively, but responsibly. And not symbolically, but meaningfully. This Bill lays the foundation for that change and the responsibility before us is simple, to no longer just talk about it but to act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Smith, Linda Smith.

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

Yes, the One Bermuda Alliance, the Opposition, supports this Bill, the concept of reducing and eliminating some single-use plastics over time. We believe that it is the responsible approach, and we also believe that, obviously, this needs to be balanced very carefully with what the consumer can afford versus the impact that some of these products are having on our shores.

Bermuda's contribution to global plastic pollution is obviously inconsequential, but what is not inconsequential is, as a people, our responsibility to do the right thing. And moving in this direction is, in fact, the right thing.

I think what we have to do is make sure that we do not get overly exuberant about trying to make a name for ourselves. There are people who would criticise this and say that single-use plastics as an initiative is really going after the low-hanging fruit. And that it is more for credit than for impact. You can agree with that or not. Our position is that this is an important initiative. We like the fact that there is going to be consultation. We like the fact that the Bill includes the requirement for there to be a reasonable alternative to products that may be prohibited and that they be cost-effective.

We do question what the definition of "cost-effective" is, particularly in the environment in which we live, which is highly expensive and obviously very sensitive to affordability, so I think that obviously has to be a major consideration.

As a small jurisdiction, Bermuda has always been pretty good about taking responsibility for our beautiful Island and trying to keep it that way. And since this was introduced back in 2018, I believe in the in the Throne Speech in 2018, people have . . . individuals and businesses have both taken it upon themselves to try to improve what they use in terms of the quality of the products and trying to move away from plastics. And when you speak to some of those people, they say that even at this stage, there are some items that are very, very hard to resource or would be exceedingly expensive to replace, and they are concerned about that. There are a lot of limitations to what service providers feel that they can do. Obviously, the containers have to be see-through. Nobody wants to buy a salad or a sandwich or sushi that they cannot see, so those are considerations.

The other thing that people bring up is that while this is a good initiative—provided that there is the consultation and provided that there is the consideration and provided that there certainly is a lot of attention given to affordability and what this means in terms of not only affordability for the consumer but the quality and the safety aspects of replacing containers with other items—they are also questioning what other things we could be doing that might have more impact than something like the single-use plastics. Not necessarily in replacement of that, but as initiatives that would help to build upon Bermuda's desire to improve its

marine environment and the marine environment globally and generally.

And one of the things that continues to come up when you are in discussion with people is people mention the dump at the airport and that if Bermuda and Government really wanted to do something to improve the marine environment, that would be a great starting point. So that is part of the discussion.

The other thing people would like to see is more initiatives with respect to recycling and maybe initiatives that could look at recycling some of the plastics that we see, and particularly maybe sending some of the plastics that we have, instead of putting them in the incinerating plant, to recycle them and send them back in some of the empty containers that go back weekly, as we know.

And the other thing that people would like to see would be better waste management in terms of the collection of trash and also requirements for proper containment for trash on the collection day, i.e., you know, proper garbage cans with lids as opposed to bags, you know, stacked up at the end of the sidewalk.

So, there are a number of initiatives people would like to see. They generally agree with this one. As I say, the question is: What is the definition of "cost-effective," a cost-effective alternative, and what kind of percentages maybe are we talking about here? Are we talking about something that is 10 per cent more expensive or 20 per cent more expensive? How is that going to be defined? And then the other question was the issue of allowing businesses to run off their inventory for six months from the time of the prohibition and the difficulty some might have because people buy in bulk. And if they are forced to destroy that inventory, obviously there will be a cost associated with that.

So, we do support this Bill, and we are glad to see it coming forward. We would like to see other things come forward to help support protecting our marine environment, and certainly a big piece of that is the dump and the management of the dump and waste management generally. So, you have our support with this, and we look forward to seeing more initiatives to help protect our environment.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I am appreciative of our Government—and particularly the Minister responsible for the Environment—bringing forth these measures today. I hasten to say one thing. In

some of the countries that are doing exactly what the Minister is doing, [they] are certainly trying to change the mind-set that exists within the country as to how these types of situations are handled, particularly as it relates to recycling.

I note that of all the countries that are moving towards adopting more measures in line with what we are doing, the United States, I do not believe, sits among them yet. Hopefully, as a small country punching above its weight in many areas, we can certainly have a more positive influence on them because as we know, and as the Minister stated, a lot of the pollution that one would see in the sea or in the ocean (as I am reminded, you put your foot, dip your foot in the Caribbean Sea, but [in] Bermuda, you are dipping your foot in the ocean) a lot of that pollution is not generated from Bermuda. And if it is being generated from elsewhere—particularly as we sit in the very significant Sargasso Sea region influence, the influence of the Gulf Stream—much of that pollution is being transported to us from other areas, notwithstanding the significant amount of industrialisation that takes place only 700 to 1,000 miles to our northwest, west, and southwest in the United States.

So, I believe we not only have a responsibility for ourselves but also within our region, that being in the Caribbean as well, to speak with multiple voices on the impact of these types of pollutions.

I note that persons like in China are looking even to move towards embracing a policy far more in keeping . . . So, [given] the influence that we could try to transport across the seas to our neighbours who are not acting in this way, I would encourage the Minister to do that as well because the impact on our community by the efforts of other persons who are our neighbours, Canada to the more north, the United States, particularly as I mentioned, and even the impact from the Caribbean is worth appreciating and considering. So, those are my comments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Honourable Minister for bringing forward this Bill, and I echo many of the comments made by my colleague, the other Shadow Minister, Linda Tucker, *[sic]* MP. I am not sure if I was walking down the same beach as the Honourable Minister, but—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Oh. What did I say?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Oh, I am so sorry. Robin Tucker, Linda Smith.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: My mistake. It is like MP Robinson; I do not know if it is morning or afternoon. Well, there we go. I apologise.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be long, but I do commend the Minister for the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the world is changing, and it could perhaps be said that we are all environmentalists today. That may not have been the case at some point in time, although it has always been something close to my heart for a long time. But we are all environmentalists today, and certainly on an Island such as ours, which is so unique and so specific and so small. And as MP Rabain just mentioned, Minister Rabain, rather, we are directly impacted on this, even though, as MP Smith noted, we are not the ones contributing to this. We are just the victims of all that gets dumped in the ocean and winds up on our shores.

And whilst it is true that this legislation is not going to make a big impact in terms of our output, it is hopefully a clarion call that we are joining other nations in the world that have taken steps to do this.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I will not make that comment. I will leave that for the Minister to say when he gets on his feet, but indeed so.

And as the Minister noted in his Statement to the House back on the 27th of March of this year, this is something that the OBA, the One Bermuda Alliance, has long been in support of.

The Minister said that what he is trying to achieve, and what this Government is trying to achieve, is not a sudden or disruptive change, but a gradual change. And we certainly agree with that, not just in this particular Bill, but generally people are more willing to accept gradual change and incremental change.

And I declare an interest because we did produce a Bill and submit it to the Government as part of the consultation process in 2021. And our Bill, too, had this same mechanism, the idea being the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of single-use plastics, or at least those single-use plastics that are harmful. And so, I hope it is not overly cheeky to say I am glad to see that phased approach being maintained in the Government Bill.

As to the empty Schedule, the Minister himself rightly recognised that there are some who might say it lacks substance. Certainly, as we stand here today, I think that that is a fair criticism. It does lack substance, but what the Minister said, and I heard him and I listened, is that it will soon be filled. And we take that assertion at face value. For my part, I would have liked to have perhaps seen certain things like plastic straws

and plastic bags in that Schedule now because they are completely unnecessary, of no benefit to our Island, easily removable, and quite clearly there are viable and cost-effective alternatives. So, the sooner you populate Schedule 1, Minister, you have my support and blessing in that regard. But I am grateful to see that the framework is now in place. As the Honourable Shadow Minister said, we support the Bill.

I do have a few points in the Bill, about the Bill itself, that I will address in Committee, but they are just minor points that do not otherwise detract from Bermuda as a whole taking a great leap forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank all of the commenters who have gone before me.

Mr. Speaker, every journey starts with the first step. And so, when I look at this legislation, I do not see it as one that is just banning plastic. It is about helping Bermuda understand and transition to a more modern, a more responsible and sustainable future. This Bill creates a structured framework to help Bermuda transition away from single-use plastics. This transition, as has been articulated and supported by the Opposition, will be done in a measurable and practical way. It ensures that an adequate amount of consultation with business, environmental groups, and the wider public must be done before any changes are implemented.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, also acknowledges that this has to be a workable and sustainable solution. It cannot work if it is just forced down people's throats. This is why this Bill goes so far to talk about how consultation will take place, transitional periods, consideration of viable alternatives, and mechanisms for appeal and review. This is how solid pieces of legislation and change can be achieved, Mr. Speaker.

As a small island in the middle of the sea, we experience the impacts, and I thank MP Pearman for mentioning that. It happens everywhere else, but it ends up here. We experience the impacts of waste, marine pollution, and climate pressures probably a little more than other countries would that do not sit in the middle of the ocean, and all this stuff just washes to us. So, this legislation puts us alongside other jurisdictions in the world that are looking to create that difference, to be that beacon of light that says we will be part of helping to preserve our earth for future generations.

This legislation also forces us to think about how these materials that we are talking about are used, how they are produced, and the impact that they will eventually have on the environment if not disposed of properly or eliminated altogether.

As spoken by the Minister responsible, Mr. Speaker, around the world we are seeing rapid growth in alternative materials to plastic. We are seeing sustainable packaging. For any of us who have ordered from Amazon, we will see it now asks if you want the original packaging or if you want additional packaging wrapped around your products, and people are being much more cognisant of giving you those options.

So, we can see where this legislation cannot only foster a better understanding of conservation for our country, but it does have an economic value as well in causing people to think differently from an economic standpoint. And it also can encourage some entrepreneurs out there who may find some products that no one would even think about.

And I want to thank the Minister because I was surprised to hear about the duty-free option because I know this is something . . . and this really speaks to the ability to discuss because I know this was discussed in another place, and one of the suggestions from that discussion was: Why not offer duty-free for persons trying to import these alternative products?

So, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda can be, as small as we are, a global leader. We can lead the way. I have not had an opportunity to look at what our sister islands to our south are doing in this area, but I can probably make a good assumption that we would be leading the way in moving towards this if not joining some of them that may already be there. I know the technical officers here will be able to advise the Minister of who is doing it.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill allows for our country to adapt over time, evolve based on evidence, based on consultation, and based on availability of practical alternatives. So rather than relying on a fixed list . . . And I fully understand what MP Pearman was talking about because I am right there. Why not have straws on there because there are already alternatives that people are using? So, to say that we are going to have consultation about straws kind of . . . But I get the point about having this consultation. If you are going to do it with one, let's do it with all to ensure that this process is just fair across the board.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I sum this up, this is an example of a responsive Government. We are setting clear policy direction while allowing for flexibility, evidence, and public engagement. It is these careful, thoughtful views that will lead and shape the implementation of this legislation. Bermuda will be better off, and we will be a leader in this area, Mr. Speaker. And I am excited to see that this is something that we all in this House are willing to rally around and make our little Island in the middle of the Atlantic more sustainable for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Minister of Home Affairs.

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

I too rise having heard the discourse this afternoon and the discussion in support of this single-use plastics Bill. And I do so from the perspective of, as an extension of the Ministry of Home Affairs work from affordability because we do recognise that change behaviours and consciousness regarding plastic and plastic use actually is another portion of the supply chain. When we talk about energy and electricity, the statistics show that roughly 99 per cent of global plastics are actually manufactured from fossil fuel. And so, the impact that it has on the cost of living, the cost of production . . . And though, [as] has been already contributed in this House today, Bermuda's total output is nominal when you think about the Paris Agreement and these other progressive targets around contribution and sustainability . . . But rather the ability to shift through the implementation of this Bill, conscious [of] patterns and behaviours that also contribute to the wider cost of living and cost of production.

I also note, you know, the energy that contributes to both fertilisation, farm machinery, processing, packaging, as well as shipping all adding to that final supply chain cost. And we talk about affordability, reducing demand, reducing oil consumption, and also creating cleaner and more environmentally friendly communities.

I know that my colleague did note too some of the regional integration of these exact same policy principles. And so I am pleased also as the Minister responsible for CARICOM to note that Antigua and Jamaica alongside Barbados and Trinidad, Dominica, and The Bahamas have all made similar steps towards implementing single-use plastics bans and transition away from this use, both at the business level, commercial level, as well as the residential level. And so, I see us as joining a policy and implementing a law and policy that is aligned to what we see other countries doing. And I think that it is a good step.

I acknowledge the Minister's phased approach and the intention to conduct consultation and essentially walk in step with the industry to ensure that things are comfortable both for them and also ultimately ensuring that the production and the pollution is decreased. But I am most thankful for the shift away from the bag use and the things that would oftentimes be so easy to use and easy to also reuse if we are able to get these sorts of items.

The duty relief is something that is also noteworthy. And I think from an overall affordability perspective, this Bill is a good one, and I do support it, both from a Home Affairs perspective to include alignment with our Caribbean brothers and sisters and their legislation and legislative efforts, as well as the total cost of living and affordability in Bermuda.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? None other?

Minister of [Public] Works [and Environment], would you like to make your comment and then lead us into Committee?

Hon. Jache Adams: Sure. I shall, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

So first [I] wanted to just simply acknowledge and thank all of my colleagues and Members for their contribution to what I believe is a significant step in the right direction for the country.

If I can have a few moments to address some of the questions that were raised, one of them was in reference to what other priority items can be undertaken to support the marine environment. And so, the Ministry understands the value of creating marine protected areas that protect the entire ecosystem in order to ensure the marine environment has greater resilience to the many impacts of climate change and potential pollution events.

Other measures include enforcing the statutes associated with chemical pollution to the marine environment, such as the recent amendments that were made to the Water Resources Act 1975. DENR also has the responsibility of maintaining the equipment, training, and exercises of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, noting that the shipping that passes from the Gulf of Mexico to Europe creates extremely busy shipping lanes near Bermuda. Maintaining this marine response contingency is therefore very important. This responsibility and equipment is also used to respond to local spills, a responsibility that DENR shares with [the Department of] Marine and Ports and the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard.

In relation to [the question] *Are there options for recycling plastic on the Island?* currently waste plastic is disposed to the Waste-to-Energy Facility at Tynes Bay that is used to convert heat energy into electrical energy that is used initially by the Tynes Bay facility and also the adjacent potable water reverse osmosis plant before any excess electricity is sent to BELCO. Therefore, treatment of plastic in this way is to some degree a mechanism of recycling said plastic.

What happens if businesses cannot use all inventory within the six-month period? So, the process from the start of the consultation to the end of the transition period amounts to over a 12-month period. So, it would be recommended that the importers adjust their importation amounts at the same time to ensure that they are not holding large amounts of stock. DENR will consult with the commercial businesses on this matter, but in accordance with the proposed Bill, any inventory left after this period will need to be disposed.

And finally, what is the definition of "cost-effective" in this context? And so, for alternatives to single-use plastics to be considered as cost-effective, these discussions . . . or discussions will be had with the

Customs Department to consider reducing the duty on such alternatives to ensure that any cost increase associated with the alternatives is reasonable compared to the proposed prohibited single-use plastic. *Reasonable*, of course, is subjective, but the Government understands to focus on those alternatives that are the cheapest for all.

And so again, I believe those are all the questions that were asked, but I do appreciate the comments that were contributed. As I said earlier, I will not be naïve to think all things, but I would like to think that matters concerning the environment, most things, can receive bipartisan support.

And so, I thank Members. And so, with that—

The Speaker: Would you like to take it to Committee now?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes. And so, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Famous, would you take the Chair, take us to the Committee?

House in Committee at 3:30 pm

[Mr. Christopher Famous, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members, and good afternoon to the listening public.

Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Single-Use Plastics Act 2026](#). I call on the Minister in charge to proceed.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, at your pleasure, I move that clauses 1 through 10—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Pardon?

I move that all clauses—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: I move all the clauses. Sorry.

The Chairman: Any Members have any objection to it?

No objections.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: All right.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Oh.

One second, Mr. Chairman.

[Pause]

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you. Bipartisanship.

[Laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: I move . . . clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 provides the interpretation of terms used in the Bill.

Clause 3 provides that this Bill provides for the prohibition of single-use plastics that are listed in Schedule 1. Clause 3 also provides the single-use plastics that the Bill will not apply to, including single-use plastics that are supplied or used for medical, health, or personal hygiene purposes and single-use plastics that are manufactured from approved biogenic materials.

Clause 4 provides for the functions of the director.

Clause 5 provides that the Minister may make a prohibition order declaring which single-use plastics are prohibited from import, sale, or offer to sell, supply or offer to supply, or possession for supply or sale. Clause 5 also provides for the reassessment of the list of prohibited single-use plastics and the amendment to the prohibition order.

Clause 6 provides for a notice of intention to be published in the *Gazette* when there is a proposal to prohibit a single-use plastic. The notice of intention is the beginning of the consultation process, which invites written representations from the public, business owners, and environmental groups. A prohibition order shall not come into effect until at least six months have elapsed since the publication of the notice of intention.

Clause 7 provides that no person shall import, sell, or offer to sell, supply or offer to supply, or possess for supply or sale, a prohibited single-use plastic. Clause 7 also makes it an offence for a person to do any of those activities outside of consultation or the transition period.

Clause 8 provides for the removal of prohibited single-use plastics from Schedule 1.

Clause 9 provides for the disposal of prohibited single-use plastics in general and the disposal of forfeited or seized prohibited single-use plastics.

Clause 10 provides that a person can submit a written request to the Director requesting the removal of a specified single-use plastic from the list of

prohibited single-use plastics in Schedule 1, on the grounds that the person considers that there are no viable or cost-effective bio-based or other alternative items available for purchase in Bermuda or from overseas. The Director shall make a decision within six weeks after receiving the request.

Clause 11 provides the appeals process for a person who may want to appeal the decision of the Director not to remove the specified prohibited single-use plastics from Schedule 1.

Clause 12 enables the Director or an authorised officer to enter and search premises with consent or under a warrant and inspect, seize, or detain any single-use plastics or documents where there is a reasonable cause to believe that an offence has been or is being committed.

Clause 13 provides that where the Director or an authorised officer has been refused entry, they can seek a warrant to enter and search the premises.

Clause 14 provides for a written notice of seized items, other evidence seized, and states that the single-use plastics may be forfeited to be provided to the owner, occupier, or person in charge.

Clause 15 provides that the owner, occupier, or person in charge of the business or specified place that the director or an authorised officer has entered into shall comply with the reasonable requirements for assistance made by the Director or an authorised officer.

Clause 16 provides the Director with the power to impose civil penalties on any person for any contravention or failure to comply with the Bill, any regulations, or directions lawfully made.

Clause 17 provides the procedure for imposing civil penalties.

Clause 18 provides the appeals process for a person who may want to appeal the Director's decision to impose a civil penalty.

Clause 19 provides for offences relating to obstruction of the Director or an authorised officer, failure to comply, failing to give assistance or information, giving false information, purporting to act as an authorised officer, and disclosing to another person information obtained by an authorised officer where the disclosure is not made in the performance of his duty.

Clause 20 gives the right to compensation where single-use plastics are seized or detained and the owner, if he is not convicted of an offence, suffers a loss as a result of the seizure.

Clause 21 provides that the Director shall issue guidance for the purposes of this Bill.

Clause 22 gives the Minister regulation-making power.

And finally, clause 23 provides for commencement of this of the Bill.

The Chairman: The Minister has read his clauses. Does anyone wish to speak to it?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes. Honourable Scott Pearman, [constituency] 22, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much.

Just a couple of quick questions. I will be guided by you, Mr. Chairman. Would you like me to do them one at a time and take my seat, or ask all of them at the same time?

The Chairman: I would say ask them all at the same time.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much.

The Chairman: That will help your knees out.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first question, Mr. Chairman, is in relation to clause 2 of the Bill. That is the section providing for interpretation. It makes reference to regulations that may be made under the Act, and there are references to regulations mostly in clause 4 but also elsewhere in the Bill. And my question is, Does the Honourable Minister, who anticipates that Schedule 1 will soon be populated, anticipate that the regulations will precede that or be contemporaneous with the Schedule 1 when produced? So that is my first question.

My second question is similar to the one by my honourable colleague, the Shadow Minister, Linda Smith (not Tucker) which is at clause 5, subsection (3). And this is where the Minister shall not make a prohibition order in relation to a particular single-use plastic unless he (being the Minister) is satisfied on the advice of the Director (which is the director of DENR) that there are, quote, "viable and cost-effective bio-based or other alternatives."

And my question is this . . . and in the debate, we heard about how that is a subjective view. We have heard from the Minister that the discussions are under-going about customs duty relief for such alternative, available, and cost-effective products. And so, my question is this. This is my second question. For the purposes of the regulations when they are made, might the Minister consider a cap so that if the environmentally sensitive alternative is three times more, well, that would be too excessive. Might we have some sort of ratio cap to assist businesses in understanding? Because if it is only, you know, incrementally more expensive, it presumably will be cost-effective. That is my second question, Mr. Chairman.

And with your direction, I will move on to my third. My third question relates to clause 5, subsection (6), which states, "Any single-use plastic in Bermuda before the commencement date of a prohibition order prohibiting it is not affected by the prohibition order if it is only being used for personal use." So, there is a grandfather clause here. If someone already has

something on the island, it will not be affected by a prohibition. That makes perfectly good sense to me. If it is already here, what are we going to do, have them destroy it? I mean, that does not make sense.

But I would invite them, when considering the regulations, to clarify whether that really should be just limited to personal use or whether that could be personal or commercial use. Again, if I order a five-year supply of garbage bags, much though I would prefer they are not in Bermuda and do not exist, but if I have ordered a five-year supply of garbage bags as a business and in comes the prohibition and I have still got four years, you know, some clarification around whether that would be grandfathered in on that one occasion or not [would be good].

And if you do not like that idea, an alternative to the same point is instead of just having six months of notice under clause 6(5), might it be better to give 12 months of notice. So, they make a, you know . . . They reduce the cost of that stock, and they clear that stock. And they have a little bit of a longer period to get rid of it. And I say that as someone who would be delighted to see these things banned.

Moving on, and I have two more, Mr. Chairman. My next one, and I think this is my fourth question, is at clause 12. And it is in relation to subsection (2) and subsection (3) of the Bill. These are powers of entry and search and seizure. And I think it is very important that when the Government or the state seeks to enter people's private premises, we are very clear and the public is not misinformed in any way or misled as to what rights the Government has of entry and what rights the Government does not have absent a judicial warrant.

And I would just point out that [subclause] (2) . . . So, this is clause 12, subsection (2). When read on its own, [it] says this, "The Director or an authorised officer may proceed to enter and search premises under this section where there is reasonable cause to believe that an offence has been or is being committed under this Act." So just read in isolation, that subsection seems to give a power of entry not regulated by the court. Clearly, the Bill goes on to regulate it by the court. My suggestion is merely this; if subsection (2) and subsection (3) were just combined into one subsection, it would be very clear that that is a tempered right of access, and nobody would be misled.

And Mr. Chairman, my final question to the Honourable Minister is in relation to clause 16 of the Bill. This is the power to impose civil penalties. I note that in the Bill that we had drafted, we were looking at something slightly more with more teeth at \$10,000. I commend the Minister for taking a staggered approach. That makes sense. But when we get to clause 16(2)(c), which is the third or subsequent violation by the same entity, I do wonder, and respectfully would invite the Minister to take it under advisement, as to whether when this Bill heads to the Senate, something slightly higher might be done for a serial offender. I think once you have got three strikes, you really should be out.

And that seems like a little bit of a wrist slap to someone who has been told once, been told twice, and is now being told a third time.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for those questions.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Anyone else wish to speak to these clauses?

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I certainly want to thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. In relation to clause 2, the Member asked, *Does the Minister anticipate that the regulations will be made prior to a listing?* And regulations will be made as and when needed to support that Act, or this Act, the upcoming Act.

Would the Minister consider a cap in relation to cost of alternative items? If the alternative single-use plastics becomes a lot more expensive over time after that prohibition was first implemented, then there is a mechanism within that would allow for those said items to be removed from the Schedule. So, yes, I think the idea is that if we do find it or those prices to be unreasonable, there is also a mechanism for it to be removed.

Could sections 12(2) and (3) be combined? I think this is a matter of drafting style. The whole provision to be read as a whole, the comment . . . But certainly something . . . Without making any promises, [it is] certainly something that we can take under advisement to look at and consider.

And so, with that, Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Oh, sorry.

Sorry, I have to move that clauses 1 and 2—all the clauses be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses [1 through 23] be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No. No objection.

Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 23 passed.]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: You [have] got to move your Schedule, *shed-yools*. Schedules, *shed-yools*. . . . Either way, you have got to move them.

Hon. Jache Adams: I move that Schedules . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: For the benefit of the listening audience, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled Single-Use Plastics Act 2026.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I move that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?
No objections.
Continue.

[Motion carried: Schedules 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Jache Adams: Here we go. I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that motion?
No objection.
Agreed to.

Hon. Jache Adams: I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection. Agreed to.
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

House resumed at 3:49 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. The Bill has been reported as printed. That brings us to a close of the matters on the Order Paper. We will now do . . . But before we do the . . . We do the third reading, and then we will have the Premier introduce the other matter that we [had] come earlier today. So, I will seek your indulgence at that time.

Minister, would you like to do your third reading?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

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

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue.

BILL

THIRD READING

SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

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

[Motion carried: The Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 was given a third reading and passed.]

The Speaker: Now, Members, I would like to seek your indulgence to allow the Premier to introduce another Bill that will be on the Order Paper for our next sitting.
Any objections?
There are none.
Premier.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 14

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 14 be suspended to enable me to introduce supplementary estimates to the Honourable House.

The Speaker: Yes, continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 14 suspended.]

BILL

FIRST READINGS

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

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

Pursuant to the powers conferred by section 96 of the Constitution, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House [of] Assembly, Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 and the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, that is now to be added to the items that will be on the Order Paper for the next sitting.
Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, I move this Honourable House to now adjourn until Friday, the 29th of May, at 10:00 am. And I am informed that someone on my side wishes to speak.

The Speaker: Does any Member wish to speak to that?
MP Richardson? Ah!

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Okay, yes. You have the floor, MP Richardson. You have got your 20 minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening or this afternoon . . . we are breaking kind of . . . we are getting through the work.

The Speaker: Do not take us to the evening. We just want to stay in the afternoon.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, well, I know.

[Laughter]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I am in 100 per cent agreement, and we will see how the House reacts.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I intend to bring up a matter, which I feel that we are remiss in discussing, because our wider community is discussing it. And it is the state of our road traffic behaviours and deaths.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that our roads have reached the point of barely being governed. We have currently . . . The chief inspector, a former officer in charge of roads policing, has gone on the record

saying we have upwards of 6, or 6 to 12 road traffic collisions per day. I repeat that, 6 to 12 road traffic collisions per day. We have mortality on our roads on a regular basis. And when it is not a mortality, it is a life-changing injury.

As it stands right now, Mr. Speaker, our community is discussing just how bad it is, and every time any one of us drives on these roads, we can see it. It is blatant. It is clear that there is a significant group of drivers who have absolutely no interest in the safety and welfare of the users of our roads.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was on my way from the town of St. George's on my scooter, and I think I was one of maybe five scooter riders that whole time who actually was in traffic. Every other scooter rider I saw was on the other side of the road whether or not there was any traffic coming.

Mr. Speaker, I was on Trimingham Hill heading south toward Trimingham Hill roundabout south, and a car overtook three cars going up that hill. And you cannot see over that hill. Mr. Speaker, at this point I am not sure what is happening. How are we going to fix this, because our people are dying on these roads? Everyone is . . . [everyone] knows to keep their hands in the car. Everyone knows that you are . . . You have no idea where the scooter is going to come from next. At this point it is just Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome out there, and at some point, someone's got to do something about these roads and this road behaviour.

And, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that our community knows this, and yet we are not discussing it. This is a problem, Mr. Speaker, because we are sent here to do the people's business, and the people are dying on the roads. Therefore, we should do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, we have tiptoed around this situation with half statements and semi-obligations now for the better part of three to four years and everything . . . every time it ends in the same status quo. It is the same way on those roads.

At this point I am not sure if we even bother with stop signs and stop lights because I do not see anybody stopping. Mr. Speaker, it is dangerous out there, and we need to get to grips with this right now. Mr. Speaker, we have heard all about speed cameras, and we have heard why they cannot be here, and how much it is a complication, and the legal process, and the constitutional aspects. And on and on the excuses go. And the simple fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, this—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There have not been any excuses made on matters related to speed cameras.

The Honourable Member will know that the Honourable Minister has given Statements on this. It has been included in the budget. It was debated during the Budget Debate, and there is legislation expected to come. And it was part of the Government's Throne Speech initiative. So, I do not believe it is accurate for the Honourable Member to say that there have been excuses and reasons why it has not been implemented because those have certainly not come from this Government.

The Speaker: The Premier has raised a point that it has been mentioned in many Statements.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, that is exactly my point, Mr. Speaker. It has been mentioned in many Statements. But I do not believe in intentions; I believe in outcomes. And I do not see a functioning speed camera. So, let's get on top of that.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, point of order. The speed camera system will be up and running in September. There are some speed cameras now being tested on our roads as we speak.

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: And . . . and please let's not politicise this here because speed cameras are not going to stop what you are talking about.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member . . . I raise a point of order that the Honourable Member was misleading the House.

The Honourable Member said that excuses were being made as to the reasons why they are not being introduced. If the Honourable Member cannot state under what justification he has that, he must withdraw. That is factually incorrect as the Throne Speech, and the budget, and others have committed to the path. And we said the path we are laying out. And the Honourable [Minister] has just said that there are speed cameras that are currently being tested on the roads as we speak.

The Speaker: What the Government is trying to point out here is that they laid out a plan, and they are working through that plan now. No, the cameras are not fully operational at this moment. But the plan was always that this be staged in. And it was not targeted to be functional now; but it was targeted to be functional at a period of time that they are working towards.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said that excuses are being made for why they cannot be implemented. And what I am saying is that is factually inaccurate because there have been no excuses that have made from this side on why these things cannot be done. And I am saying he has to withdraw that part. He is fine to talk about what it is, because we agree on this matter. But he is saying that excuses are being made and that is not factually correct.

The Speaker: The point that is being made on the point of order is that there have not been excuses. There has been a plan that is being executed, and the plan did not say they would have been done yesterday or some time back. The plan is moving now towards the date that was the objective that was already put out there. So, it has not been an excuse why it has not been done. There is a plan that is being worked towards.

So, it would be an excuse if I had said they are going to be done yesterday or six months ago and I am not completing. I am still now making excuses why it was not done. But there was no date set like that. It was a plan that it is being implemented, and these are the steps that are being done. So, it will be working towards that.

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

It was not my intention to speak on . . . And I am going to keep going.

The Speaker: Basically, the piece of making excuses is what is being asked to redress because there have not been excuses because they just have not . . . They are still working towards the plan.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I stand to be guided always by your rulings, and I will move on because the road traffic accidents in Bermuda and the behaviour in Bermuda will not be fixed alone by speed cameras. That was one of four points, so I am glad that I was able to get the Government to respond. Let's see how they do on the other three points of this argument.

Mr. Speaker, equally another solution that we need to bring forward as quickly as possible is updating the law enforcement mechanisms for the issuing of citations for misconduct on our roads. We currently are using a paper-based system that has been in use. I left the police in 2008. It is the same system, and the system that I was raised on. My instructors told me [it] started in the 1980s. So, effectively, we are in 2026,

and the problem with this, Mr. Speaker, is because it takes so very long to write a ticket because you have to fill out so much content on that ticket and because you then have to go back to the station—which means leaving your patrol route to put that data in the system. This takes a ridiculous amount of time. So, every time someone has to be issued a citation and summoned to court to deal with the road traffic behaviour, it goes through a process that effectively takes the police officer out of the policing for that day. It is a lengthy process, laborious and inefficient. And as it stands right now, we know we need more cops on the streets. So that is another example of what we can do.

And I do not have [any] idea why we cannot modernise this because if we are going to be a digital on-chain economy, if we are going to be the world's centre for reinsurance, if we are going to be all of these things publicly to the world, then surely we can do better than this.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Further, Mr. Speaker, I would speak to the court processes for dealing with those tickets and summonses because, as it stands right now, every single traffic offence has to go before the courts. And we have all been to Magistrates' Court in the morning, or Plea Court, and it is a . . . you just spend all that time there just waiting in line while people come up with excuses after excuses for all of the traffic offences. And we just cannot get this bad behaviour under control.

There are two processes that we are talking about here, not just the Plea Court process. In a modern jurisdiction what we would have is an automated process where if a ticket was issued . . . it would be easy to issue, first of all. And if it was issued, it would be easy to pay. And that means we would get more tickets, more discipline on our roads by our law enforcement. We would, in fact, be reinforcing them and making their jobs easier and making our roads safer.

Further, Mr. Speaker, my honourable colleague, the Shadow Attorney General, has made the point about the Coroner's Office and how that process has gone to consultation. And he is very happy to contribute to that because the coroner's process is just as key. You see, Mr. Speaker, we operate a system of laws—not one law. So, it is not just the Road Traffic Act or the Motor Car Act. It is not just the one ticket. It is the entire system that has to tie together to enable us to get a grip of these roads. And these are not glamorous. They are not fancy. But they are necessary because we can see, right now, having such outdated processes and systems means, effectively, that our roads are getting worse and worse by the day.

Mr. Speaker, further and finally, I would add that the infrastructure situation, which the Government has spoken about ad nauseum . . . but the simple fact of the matter is, road traffic accidents are occurring due to road obstacles like potholes. And right now, given

that it is so difficult for the coroner to reach a conclusion, we are not able to get the statistics relating to how many mortalities, or fatalities or injuries are related to that.

So, effectively, Mr. Speaker, the reason why our roads are out of control is because we have not kept up to date with all of the things that we need to. It is a total system, and if we take the whole thing together and we address it, then the roads get under control. As it stands right now, we are losing more and more people. More and more people are getting injured. Our roads are getting less safe, and it is time for serious action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister Darrell—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you.

The Speaker: —would you like your 20 minutes?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, I would, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I definitely will not be taking 20 minutes.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Hon. Owen Darrell: But I think, as the Minister responsible for Transport, it is prudent for me to get up and respond to the speech of which was just given by my honourable colleague from the other side.

And I want to just highlight the work that is being done by the Road Safety Council. We know we do have a former [chairman] of the Road Safety Council who is here in this House, Mr. Speaker, who was recognised, actually last week during Road Safety Week . . . Dennis Lister III, the Junior Minister for Justice.

And before I get into responding to all of the things that could be done better, I would like to highlight that last week, or two weeks ago, was Road Safety Week, May 3 to 9. And we started the conversation loudly about Operation Action, and we talked about changing minds and changing behaviours. In the middle of Road Safety Week, Mr. Speaker, there was a road safety demonstration on the steps of City Hall, which was attended by the mayor of Hamilton, myself, the King Edward Memorial Hospital emergency doctor, the acting commissioner of police, Allshores Insurance, the chairman of the Road Safety Council, as well as the chairman of CADA [Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse]. And while I am not going to sit here and attack anything that the Member from the other side said, I would like to say this: The work that these individuals

are doing to try to encourage our public to change behaviours cannot be classified as *half* speeches.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it is a full complement of members who have been appointed by myself, the Minister responsible for Transport, who take time out of their schedules every week (Wednesdays, to be exact) to meet and strategise how they can spread the message to the public, that changing mind-sets and changing behaviours will go further than any legislation that this Government will put in place, and has put in place, for the behaviours on the road. People need to change their behaviours.

Yes, there are road obstacles. There are actions that this Government is looking to change, and that is for some of my other colleagues to speak about. But the number one reason why we see some of the behaviours happening on these roads is because of distracted drivers, as well as intoxicated drivers, Mr. Speaker. Intoxicated drivers and intoxicated driving are at some of the highest levels that we have seen. And it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. But because we do respect the privacy, and we are very cautious of the families who may be grieving in certain times around certain instances, the full scope of what intoxicated driving is doing to individuals unfortunately is not spoken.

But I would ask the Member from the other side to go back and listen to the full speech that was given by the emergency room doctor at the Road Safety Council about a week ago. She was able to give full stats as to how many intoxicated drivers and others are coming through the emergency room. And she even went further to talk about what the strain of some of these accidents is doing for some of the other individuals in the hospital who may need care. So, while I know it may not have been the intent, Mr. Speaker, of the Member from the other side to throw shots, I will go back and say that I am very proud of the work that the Road Safety Council is doing. And you will see some plans that will be rolled out very, very shortly to try to get to the hearts of individuals for them to encourage their family members, their friends to change their mind-set.

Mr. Speaker, I was grateful to see you at the event last week that the Road Safety Council put on to honour some of the individuals of past who have put great time—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —and great effort, great sacrifice into trying to bring about change on Bermuda's roads. We had firefighters there. Mr. Speaker, I do not have to go into detail as to the emotional strain that is on the first responders who have to show up to some of these scenes. Police officers were there as well.

Mr. Speaker, we had the former [chairmen] of the Road Safety Council, including Dr. Joseph Francioni, who has (as you know) significant experience as an emergency room physician. We also had past

[chairmen] of the Road Safety Council. So, Mr. Speaker, while I do agree that this is a very important topic—and it is an important topic—that we must pay attention to more outside of the legislation that will come, and outside of the speed cameras and outside of the changes to certain Acts, the behaviours must change, first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, with individuals' mind-sets.

So, once again, before I take my seat, I will say thank you to the members of the Road Safety Council, which includes members of the Junior Road Safety Council. Say thank you to the past members and past [chairmen] of the Road Safety Council, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say thank you to the four new members on the Road Safety Council who have stepped up to give their expertise as to what can be done, from the youngest of individuals who go to school to the adults who use the roads every day and will call themselves “experienced” road users. Because I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, when we put out these expressions of interest for different boards, the [number] of expressions of interest that come from people to say, *I believe I can make a difference*.

So, Mr. Speaker, while I do not disagree with the Honourable Member from the other side bringing this to our attention, I must again reiterate that there are individuals in this community who care very deeply about what is happening on these roads, and they are putting some significant time and effort into coming up with further strategies, further examples to give to Government as to how we can possibly change some of the mind-sets. And it starts at home, and it starts with individuals and their own behaviours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

MP Linda Smith, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Ms. Linda Smith: I actually attended some of the Road Safety Council presentation on the steps of City Hall. I did not know it was on. But I happened to be in town, and it caught my attention, so, I sat down and took in what was left of it. And I did hear the comments from the emergency room doctor and some others. And it was a great event that they had.

But what we have is a problem that is really systemic, and it needs a multifaceted approach to coming to a better place. And one area that . . . and certainly, changing mind-sets is an important part of this. Education is an important part of this. People feeling a responsibility for each other and a sense of courtesy and all of those things. But those happen over time, and

they are not going to happen fast enough to save the number of people who, you know, are going to die in the weeks and months ahead because of the carnage that we see on our roads.

I remember years ago, when people used to talk about, what . . . behaviour on the roads was much better. People were concerned about being caught, taken off the road, losing their licence for a period of time, and all of the inconvenience that went with that. You do not hear anybody talking about that anymore, and you do not seem to see people who really, kind of, feel like there is much of a consequence to misbehaving on the road. It used to be that, you know, people respected the fact that even if you did not respect the other people on the road, you did not want to lose your licence and you did not want the inconvenience for you and your family. You did not want the cost. You would also see a lot more police officers on the road, and certainly just the visual of seeing police officers on the road, you can see the traffic starting to slow down. People start paying attention. Nobody wants to get caught. But if there is nobody around, and nobody is going to get caught, and over a period of time stop signs become invisible. You know, road markings mean nothing. Driving down the middle of the road has just become commonplace. And there is nothing to, kind of, trigger your memory that maybe—or trigger your mind-set—that maybe what I am doing is careless and dangerous and, you know, I could cause a lot of harm with my behaviour. There is just nothing out there to remind you of that.

And I think we need to see a lot more of that. We need to see some enforcement, a lot more enforcement, so that people are going to court and these things are being adjudicated quickly and efficiently. People are feeling the pain of bad driving and bad driving habits. People are getting retrained as to how to develop maybe better driving habits. It does have to be a systemic approach to this.

And the other thing is, it is not just the driving. Because the people who get seriously injured during those 6 to 12 accidents that happen . . . I mean, we all gasp when we hear the ambulances going and the police cars, because we think, *Oh, I hope it is not something horrible*. And invariably, it is something pretty awful. And, you know, it is the cost of those people being in the hospital. It is the problem with the beds, and the overcrowding, and how everybody else who is in the emergency room gets dealt with because of this trauma that has come in.

So, it just, it goes down the line. And it increases the cost of our insurance. The people who are involved in these accidents, many of them have life-changing, debilitating leftover effects from this. So, it makes them less productive than they would have been. It makes their life less, you know, happy and healthy and, you know, liveable than it otherwise would have been. These are life-changing events. And they are also life-changing for the people who are waiting for

a bed in the hospital, who are also having life-changing events but cannot be dealt with because of the trauma that has just come in the door.

And so, you know, I think we just need to look at this, you know, across the board, from so many areas, and tackle it from a number of directions so that we are getting better behaviour, we are getting better enforcement, we are getting better penalties, we are getting better results. And that will help the hospital, and it will certainly help, you know, just trying to maintain what we have. And so, I would like to see that, and I would like to see, maybe, some strategic overall policy or programme or something that incorporates all of these elements, because it is not a single problem. It is not a single issue, it is a multifaceted issue that needs a multifaceted approach.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Minister, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, good afternoon—

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: —Mr. Speaker.

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I OF ETHIOPIA FIRST REIGNING KING TO VISIT BERMUDA

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, just two weeks ago I had the opportunity to greet His Majesty King Charles III on Trunk Island and accompany him on a boat ride to the Bermuda Aquarium Museum and Zoo, as we commemorated the institution's 100th anniversary. It was one of those . . . it was in those brief moments we shared our deep passion for the environment and, in particular, the protection of our oceans.

Mr. Speaker, whatever one's personal views may be regarding the institution of monarchy, the history of colonisation, or the role of the British Crown in our region, it is not every day that one gets the opportunity to have an audience with a reigning king. It was undoubtedly a historic occasion, and one that I will personally remember for years to come. However, Mr. Speaker, throughout that visit, I repeatedly heard it stated on various forums that King Charles III was the first reigning king to visit Bermuda. And so today I rise simply and respectfully to correct the record. Because while His Majesty was the first reigning *British* king to visit Bermuda—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: —he was not—and I repeat, he was not—the first reigning king to visit our shores. That

distinction, Mr. Speaker, belongs to His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: One of the most consequential African leaders of the 20th century, who visited Bermuda not once, but twice, during his reign.

Mr. Speaker, before speaking specifically about those two visits, I think it is important to understand who Haile Selassie was, and why his presence in Bermuda carries such significance, particularly for Black Bermudians in the 1960s.

Mr. Speaker, Haile Selassie I was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia on November 2, 1930, at St. George's Cathedral in Addis Ababa. His coronation was watched around the world and marked as one of the most significant royal ceremonies of the modern era. Now, during that coronation, he assumed many titles, including King of Kings [of Ethiopia], the Elect of God, and perhaps most notably, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Mr. Speaker, there was another important detail about that coronation that often goes overlooked. You see, traditionally at that time, within Ethiopian custom, the Empress would be crowned 30 days later than the Emperor. But Haile Selassie insisted that he and Empress Menen be crowned together on the very same day. This was viewed by many as a profound statement of partnership and shared responsibility between husband and wife.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a bit more context, because by the time Emperor Haile Selassie first arrived in Bermuda, he was already globally respected. He had become internationally admired for resisting fascist Italy in the 1930s, and for standing before the League of Nations to warn the world of the dangers of fascism. In 1936, he was recognised as *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year." Mr. Speaker, with that being an ever so brief history into the life of the Emperor, we note that Haile Selassie's first visit to Bermuda in October of 1963 came at the end of a seven-day ceremonial visit to the United States, where he addressed the United Nations and later met with President Kennedy.

Now, I need this to be noted, that he came to Bermuda after addressing the United Nations. Why? Because it was at that General Assembly he boldly delivered a speech, and within that speech he let the world know: "that until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned; that until there are no longer first class or second class citizens of any nation; that until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes; that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of

international[al] morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained."

Mr. Speaker, I am just quoting the King of Kings.

Mr. Speaker, the Emperor stopped in Bermuda for a one-day visit in 1963. Yet, despite its brevity the visit left a lasting impression on this country. Upon arriving at Kindley Air Force Base, the Emperor's first official act was to plant a tree at Government House as a living memorial to his visit. He was then taken on a sightseeing tour that included Gibb's Hill Lighthouse. And that evening the Emperor attended a dinner with local dignitaries, before departing Bermuda the following day.

But Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the most meaningful details came months later, when the Emperor wrote directly to Bermuda's Governor at that time, expressing his gratitude for the welcome that he had received. And in that letter, Mr. Speaker, the Emperor wrote, "The warm and heartfelt reception accorded us by Your Excellency and the people of Bermuda during our stopover in your beautiful country is still a vivid memory. We shall always treasure and long remember the visit."

Mr. Speaker, to many, the affirmation of those words was demonstrated when just four years later, in 1967, Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Bermuda while travelling to North America to [attend] the Montreal Expo, in 1967. Now this second visit was larger in scale and drew enormous public attention. The Emperor travelled with an entourage of dignitaries, journalists, musicians and dancers. He was met by the full guard of honour from the Bermuda Regiment and the Bermuda Regiment Band, while hundreds gathered for a reception at Government House hosted by the then Governor.

And Mr. Speaker, the historical significance of these visits extended beyond diplomacy or ceremony. For many Black Bermudians in the 1960s, Haile Selassie represented something powerful and deeply affirming. Witnessing a Black African Emperor, a sovereign leader respected across the world, arriving in Bermuda with dignity, prestige and global influence had a profound psychological and cultural impact.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I rise today, not to diminish the significance of King Charles III's visit, nor to make any broader political statement about the monarchy itself. I will leave that for another time and another day. Rather, I rise because history matters. Facts matter. When we speak about "firsts"—particularly within the context of Black history, African history, Bermudian history—we have a responsibility to ensure the record is accurate.

Emperor Haile Selassie I was a reigning monarch. He visited Bermuda in 1963 and again in 1967. And therefore, respectfully, King Charles III was not the first reigning king to visit Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes the correction of history may seem like a small thing. But preserving truth is an important responsibility of this Honourable House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Much has been said, and there is much that we can agree upon in terms of where we need to go as a country to make sure that we are all prosperous, especially the vulnerable and the underserved. The question I have is, were Emperor Haile Selassie to be alive today, what would he say about the state of affairs that currently exists in Bermuda since his last visit on this Island? What would he say about the state of our educational system? What would he say about the number of young Black Bermudians who are getting killed needlessly due to violence and lack of opportunity? Overrepresented in prisons, underrepresented in the employment market. Overrepresented in terms of persons requiring services for mental health, and others because of the traumas that they are suffering, because of the circumstances that we are now in since we have a government of the people, for the people, who look like the people who were suffering and oppressed.

What would he say now, about how we are treating those same people, when we are in a position of great responsibility to do something meaningful? We talk about what needs to be done, and we are all in agreement, on both sides of the House. And it is about the execution of the shared vision and mission to make lives better for all of us, especially the underserved and those in need.

So, when we were talking about road traffic deaths and specific things that needed to be done to prevent needless death of young persons in this community, it suggests that a back-to-basics approach is what is required. We knew, those of us who are 55 and older (I guess it is still quite a few people in here), that 65 kilometres and over you were off the road. It was not about points. Now when you go to the court, the Magistrate has to go ahead and break out a calculator, figure out how many points it takes to be over so that you cannot drive. *But let's go ahead and let you drive your construction vehicle, which weighs four times as much as the bike, when you were riding whilst disqualified and we gave you time to pay for four years and you did not. We did not confiscate your bike. We took our time, or it appeared that we took our time, to bring you before the court, to pay your fees owed to the people of this country.*

Our approach to enforcement is actually our approach to enabling the very behaviours that we are

trying to change. When we ride on the roads, bikes and cars, how often do we see a police car? When you get into an accident and somebody has not been hurt, they will drive past and let you sort it out yourself. Hopefully, the person whom you get in accident with is honest, and the licence and everything is up to date, but you are not going to know that. And then when, on occasion, you do call the police who are engaged in other activities and are stretched thin because of the nature of the work, problems are caused, delays are caused, justice is denied. The point is, we have to do things differently. We have to recognise that if we hold the sanctity of life as one of the primary and critical areas of need that we must protect, we must do things differently.

Speed cameras? Absolutely. But I would hope that we would have a traffic squad like we used to, before. RoboCop and Boxhead. For those of you who used to ride, they were there. You knew, if you were speeding, you were going to get caught, and I did.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: Yes Paynter.

You knew you were going to be held accountable. You were going to go to court, and you were going to have to pay some money, and chances were you were going to come off the road.

When we are talking about enforcement, we are talking about a presence in the community to address the necessary behaviours that need to change. Parish constables used to be regularly a part of the community. Not for law and order, but to be responsive to the needs of the community. To help connect persons in need and persons who were having adverse childhood experiences to mentorship and other programmes, so that there was not an escalation in the very behaviours that we are trying to change. A community holistic approach.

When we used to have a "wandering abroad," which was an offence on the books. And then we, rightfully so, according to Human Rights, said that being homeless is not a crime, we did not put any meaningful measures in place to . . . We are not pointing fingers here, what we are talking about is how we approach the problem with the available information that we have. So, this is not a criticism. What we do accept is, the number of homeless people is increasing. That is a fact. Mr. Speaker, 1,331 since last year, when it was 1,101, I think it was. More persons are receiving financial assistance. The cost of living is rising for everybody else.

Behaviours on Front Street where persons are using substances and going to the liquor store right next door to get singles of, you know, Super T's and Elephants, and then causing problems to the persons who are coming off the ferries—locals, tourists. We see it, we ignore it, the problem continues and then last year somebody got killed.

Banners [are] not supposed to be posted. And in certain areas they have come down. I thank the Minister for that. And at the same time, we are not seeing a consistency in enforcement. So, in some areas they are now down, and thankfully so, but in other areas they crop up. You see them by Marsh Folly, by the where the old dump is. I think there is going to be a concert at the end of the month, Sound Clash or something.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Robert King: I drive regularly; [I] drive past it. The point is, if we want the certain behaviours to change, we want our Island to look a certain way, we want a lifestyle to be safe and secure, we want people to show care and regard for each other, we have to exercise good judgment and discipline in what we are doing as a Government, and the civil servants, and the people on the front line, all of us working together.

So, the police officer who makes the arrest can be assured that when the person goes to court, the person receives the appropriate justice. When we are talking about impaired driving, we have a culture of driving under the influence. And now, when we have the medicinal cannabis framework, that is going to be another consideration in terms of making sure that the police are properly trained, doctors are properly trained, so that persons using are not going to be using medications irresponsibly.

So, there are all these layers to the levels of responsibility and behavioural change that are required. Absolutely. The Constitution needs to be updated so that we can remain current, and responsive, and respond appropriately to the needs of the community. Absolutely. We are all on board. It needs to be done properly. Enforcement, fundamentally, is the issue. We all agree that things need to change. Current practices, as relates to the one example given about road deaths, is not working. Mr. Speaker, 1,400 deaths . . . 1,400 accidents a year; approximately 136 serious injuries; preventable deaths through knives, guns and road traffic, approximately 17 per year.

And as rightly was spoken about by my colleagues to the right and left, the impact on the community in terms of health care costs, traumas to family, health care, and the list goes on.

What I am asking this Government and this House for, is an agreement to work collectively and collaboratively towards the addressing of these critical areas of need. With strategic plans, with timelines, with approaches that are data driven, and that we are not afraid to discuss what is working well, to take advice from other jurisdictions from the south, north, east and west, all over the globe; what works and implement that and track the results and make the necessary and difficult changes that will impact in the short- and long-term for this community.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any other Member?

MP Famous, would you like your 20 minutes on the clock?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Christopher Famous: It seems the OBA is getting very much coordinated with their MTAs.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Teamwork, I was not . . . I was not—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I was not . . . I was not . . . it was a compliment.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Take . . . take it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: What I will say, I do not think the Honourable Member who sat down should conflate what he had to say with what the previous speaker before him had to say, because the reverence of his Imperial Majesty should not be mixed up with what you are trying to use.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I did not get to speak on the condolences. I was caught up with something else, so I would like to take a few minutes to recognise some folks who have passed since the last time we stood here.

Mr. Elroy Eve—

The Speaker: You could [hold] them for the next sitting if you like.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, we never know what is going to happen next time. The list is only going to get longer.

Mr. Elroy Eve of Devonshire. Mr. . . . Brother Peter Powell, formerly of BELCO. Ms. Leila Chavis (Née Matthie) of St.—used to be of St. George's. Brother Floyd Forth, I would like to associate my name with that. Mrs. Darlene Bascome Emery, a Berkeleyite. You may know her, she was in your, sort of, generation. Mr. Peter Crisson of Crisson's Jewellery. Mr. S-Utchat Massey, also known as Claire Leeann. And Mr. Troy Commissiong, brother of former MP Ralph Commissiong.

[Inaudible interjections]

SENHOR SANTO CRISTO FESTIVAL

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend marks the celebration of the [Senhor] Santo Cristo Festival, which is a festival celebrated by persons from São Miguel in the Azores. Now for those who do not know, the Azores are, for lack of a better term, a colony of Portugal. So, there is actually separate islands. São Miguel is the largest of nine islands, and the majority of persons in Bermuda of Azorean descent come from São Miguel.

So, every year they put on an event at St. Teresa's. It used to be our BAA at times, but now it is going to be at Mount Saint Agnes. And so, this year they are trying something to incorporate more Bermudian, make it a little bit more holistic bringing in the Gombey, the Portuguese . . . sorry, the Filipino dancers. For those who like Malasadas, I suggest you get there early because it is going to be a very long line.

But what it speaks to, Mr. Speaker (and I will speak to another point later on), is that the Azorean persons in Bermuda are part of our culture. Some look straight Azorean, some are mixed, and some you cannot even tell but they have Azorean blood. But they are as Bermudian as the rest of us, Mr. Speaker. And there was a time that the then colonial government (King Charles's people), did not allow Azorean men to bring their families here. They said, *No! You are here to work; you are not here to socialise*. So, you know what the inevitable result of that will be, Mr. Speaker.

So, I encourage all of Bermuda to learn about the Santo Cristo Festival, irrespective of their own religious beliefs, but this is a part of our Bermudian culture.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I also want to give congrats to two of our sister parties who have recently been, what is the correct word for it?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Returned to power in the Caribbean.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Hmm?

An Hon. Member: Successful.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, extremely successful. The first congrats goes to the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party. Last year, we had Minister Chet Greene come and be our guest speaker at our annual banquet. Yes, MP Tyrrell's friend—

An Hon. Member: Football friend.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Football friend.

And on April 30, the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party went from 9 seats to 15. Mr. Speaker, 15 out of 17 seats. What did that speak to? That spoke to the fact that they are stable. The people in the country realise, irrespective of the noise of the Opposition party, that they have seen progress under the Antigua Bermuda . . . Barbuda, sorry, Labour Party. And they will return to power.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, most of us have Caribbean heritage. Many of us have Caribbean heritage. And I can proudly stand tonight to say one of my cousins was elected for the first time. She was a Senator, now she's an MP and a Minister.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in our sister island of The Bahamas—the Commonwealth of The Bahamas—the Progressive Liberal Party, the original PLP, was returned to power on May 12. Out of 41 seats, the Progressive Labour Party of The Bahamas—

An Hon. Member: Liberal.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry, Progressive Liberal Party. Oh, thank you for that correction. The Progressive Liberal Party of The Bahamas has 33 of those seats. So, it is safe to say that that is a landslide.

Now for those who remember, Mr. Speaker, in 2022, the Prime Minister, the Honourable Brave . . . Philip “Brave” Davis, and many of his Ministers came to Bermuda to speak during our annual convention. They reminded Bermudians, especially the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party family, of the connections between the PLP in Bermuda and PLP in The Bahamas, the shared values and the shared motto. We both say, “PLP all the way.”

Mr. Speaker, in stark comparison, in the UK, the British Labour Party has suffered some terrible losses as of late. It appears as if the fascist (Is that the word, fascist?)—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Fascist party, the Reform Party, have made inroads in turning British . . . sorry, English people against everyone else. The fascist Reform Party has made inroads in local elections to the chagrin (Is that is the word, chagrin?)—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: To the chagrin of many. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that Prime Minister Keir Starmer probably will not last until July. He has not one, not two,

not three, but possibly four of his own MPs trying to take his seat.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I actually look back and I say, *Well, did not this happen underneath the* (What do you call that?) *Conservative Party*? You had David Cameron. Then you had, what is the lady's name?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, before her.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: They have had, in the last 10 years, there have been six British Prime Ministers.

What is the point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker? There are those who say, *Look to the UK for stability*. But a Prime Minister cannot last more than two years in the UK, if that. So how are they any beacons of morality for anyone else? They are not.

Meanwhile, in the Caribbean, Prime Ministers are lasting six and seven, sometimes 10 years. So, I say to the people, do not ever come to us and say, *Look to the UK for political stability*, because there is none there.

Is Minister[sic] Fahy, I mean Michael Fahy here?

No? He is gone?

No, he is not here.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, moving on to housing. As we know, we have a challenge with affordable housing in Bermuda. And rightfully, people are asking, *What is the Government doing about it?* Well, last week, Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Housing Corporation opened four renovated units [on] Middletown [Lane]. Four is not a lot in the grand scheme of things. We'll be opening five more before Cup Match. Nine is not a lot in the grand scheme of things. So, Mr. Speaker, last week, Monday, the Honourable Minister Zane De Silva launched his affordable housing initiative.

So, a lot to read, but basically it says that the Bermuda Government is committed to building hundreds of affordable housing units in this country. So, I say to the people, number one, your Government is doing something. But I also say to the people, all right? That the government owns land in the extremes of the Island. In the extreme east, down at Southside. In the extreme west, west of Watford Bridge. That is the right place, Watford Bridge, MP?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: West of Watford Bridge. Great.

So, when we start building these affordable units, they are not going to be single units. They cannot be single units. It is not cost-effective to do that. They are going to be multiple story units. No, they are not going to be skyscrapers. They are going to be multiple storeys.

And no, they are not going to be built the traditional Bermuda way. They are going to be built precast panels. *What are precast panels?*, people are asking. Anyone here, anyone familiar with Frog Lane, Top Square, Hermitage Road, Boaz Island, even? There are precast houses that were built 40 years ago under the United Bermuda Party that still stand and will probably stand for another 400 years. Because that is the quality of the material.

So, for those who think that the Government, via the Bermuda Housing Corporation, are building some fly-by-night thing, it is not true. The cost of building in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, is nearer to \$700 to \$800 a square foot. By doing the precast panels we are able to do it for substantially less. So, I just want to reassure people that the Bermuda Government, via a generous grant from the . . . not grant, sorry. What do they call that? Guarantee. A guarantee from the Ministry of Finance, [to be] able to do these sorts of things.

CARICOM

Mr. Christopher Famous: Finally, Mr. Speaker, last night I was invited to be a panellist at an event in Somerset. And I was thinking to myself, what should I wear? What should I wear?

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I did not. And I decided, let me just wear something neutral-ish.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, the point is that I was invited to a panel up at St. James Church Hall to talk about CARICOM. Bermuda is moving forward as, potentially moving forward as, a full member of CARICOM. Now, we all know what the weather was like yesterday. It was kind of iffy, but a good turnout was had—interesting turnout, seating arrangements, the way people sat. And then, as the panellist with the Honourable Alexa Lightbourne, and the Honourable Attorney General, Kim Wilkerson, gave their dissertations. I gave my part.

And then the questions came. And you have to ask yourself, *Are we here talking about CARICOM? Or are we talking about something that somebody wants to divert the topic?* You see, Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious when people do not want to actually discuss the issue at hand, they bring up these things called “red herrings.” *What about the trees? What about the roads? What about this?* And you are saying, *You know, this isn't the Minister for that.* [Then they ask:] *What about emigration?*

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, here it is. The Minister is taking her time, and the DCI and all the other folks, taking the time to set up this whole . . . to give people information. Information that they say, *We want more information*. But when you actually give them the platform to ask those questions, they want to ask other things to turn away from the actual topic.

You see, one of the questions they ask is, *What about all the money you are going to be spending for this thing? Why are you going to spend all this money?* It is a valid question. *What are you getting in return?* And I am sorry I did not get to answer somebody because then I said . . . and I go back to what the Honourable Jache Adams said, *What about all the money we spent on the Governor every year? What about all the money we spend on his staff every year? What about all the money we spent refurbishing Government House?*

The Governor . . . the Governor does not work for the people of Bermuda, folks. He works for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, a.k.a. the British Government, a.k.a. the Crown. And we, as the colonised, are paying his salary. We, as the colonised, are paying his travel expenses. We, as the colonised, are paying for his housing. That big house, the biggest house in Bermuda, for one person. They ask, *Why are you spending all this money on CARICOM?* No one asks how much money we spent when the King came here. Sorry, the second King came here. No one asks us that. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have a mind-set in this country that if it is of colonial colour, it is okay. Spending money; do not ask any question. But anything to do with the Caribbean, it is an issue. Anything. I am going to say it again: Anything that is of colonial history (present day) it is no problem, spend the money. Oh, we got to go England again, spend the money. Oh, we got to bring in somebody from England, spend the money. No one asks us.

But the minute we are talking about an institution to help move us as Bermudians, all of us, forward, it becomes an issue. We have to be honest as a country, Mr. Speaker. We have double standards. All right? And I am not saying that we have all the answers in regard to CARICOM. But what I can tell you, of the money we spend on the Governor, we do not get anything back. The UK does not send any money down here.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: What money [do] they send here?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Anyway, my point, Mr. Speaker, is this. When we stand up, we have to face the Union Jack in the year 2026. Everything we do in this country is based off of a colonial history. But no one

has a problem with that. But the minute Black people start saying, *Let's talk to other Black people*, it is an issue. That is what we really have to examine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Is there any other Member? Minister? Okay. MP Swan has the floor.

ROYAL VISIT INVITATION NOT RECEIVED BY MP

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

Mr. Speaker, I hadn't intended to speak on the motion to adjourn today. But I feel compelled, as one who is old enough to remember the direct influence of His Majesty, Haile Selassie's appearance in Bermuda. In fact, I had a schoolteacher who I was very close to. We used to call him Emperor, because he looked just like His Imperial Majesty. And his name was (the late) Chesley Trott. I considered it an honour to offer a tribute at his memorial service at Barr's [Bay] Park.

The Emperor, his presence in Bermuda. I am old enough to remember my mentor, the late Walter King, Member of Parliament for Hamilton East, who actually introduced me to politics somewhat, along with the other golfers who hung around the golf course and talked politics when they were not playing golf. He was a member of the UBP before he switched over and then joined the PLP and ran in [19]76 and got elected. And within a month, was standing on the very lawn of Parliament, greeting Her Majesty the Queen, of which I did not realise at that time.

But Walter Lister, who got elected that same election, sent me those pictures as I was writing articles about Mr. King's legacy in golf and his impact on me. Because as a young person trying to emulate one of my mentors, I actually sit in Parliament as a direct result of Mr. King. And as the Opposition Leader, I remember when Her Majesty visited Bermuda when Dr. Brown was the Premier of Bermuda, and all Members of Parliament were afforded the opportunity to meet. Because unlike anybody else that is in Bermuda, not too many swear an oath. We swear an oath when we come to Parliament. You swear an oath when you become an Opposition Leader or a Cabinet Minister. You swear an oath when you become a Junior Minister. You pledge allegiance to Her Majesty, or His Majesty, and their heirs.

And I do think that had the Imperial Majesty come to Bermuda, as he did go to Jamaica in 1963, a year after independence, he would have done the same thing that he did there. He would have addressed Parliament, and all Parliamentarians would have had an opportunity to have met him. You know, I'm old enough to . . . you know, I grew up in golf. And one thing about golf, we call penalties on ourselves, because we aim to be better than anybody else, no matter

what our circumstances are. And fairness is first amongst that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say I wasn't here when the King visited Bermuda. I was actually in Windsor when he was here. I was actually having a meal where I could look down a lane, where I could walk 25 yards—no, 25 paces, just 25 yards—and look up that lane and see Windsor Castle. And I'll say this, the waiter who told me that he [had been to] Bermuda, said, *We're here, your King is there*. He said, *I'm glad you're here, because I don't care too much when he's here*.

So, I said, *It's in reverse*. I said, *My folks are waving, my folks are waving flags. But as a Parliamentarian overseas I never received an invite*.

And I do not think that is right. And whoever was responsible for that, I am here to say it is not right! You cannot have a sovereign of a country come here and not do that. And if I am not prepared to say it here, I shouldn't be here!

I said my piece.

I feel for those Members who may only serve one term. But as in 1976, when the Progressive Labour Party and my mentor sat in Opposition, he had an opportunity to choose if he so wanted to. He did not have to be there, because I am sure Members chose not to be there, but they had a choice.

And Mr. Lister, who raced me out of Somerset in 1983 when I ran (you know a little bit about that), is seen with his spouse—with his spouse—meeting Her Majesty, I believe. And I am one of the few people who will stand here and tell you in this Parliament that they actually voted for independence in 1995 and still indicate that I would love independence for Bermuda tomorrow. But right is right.

SOUTHAMPTON PRINCESS HOTEL

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, on right is right, I just want to thank the Government on this occasion for having the courage to see through bringing to this shore the restoration of the Southampton Princess Hotel. When I was away, I saw soft announcements coming forth. And I was reminded of the fact that it was not an easy process. There were objections on a number of fronts, and there were persons who did not want it. And I am glad to have been one of those who saw the need for it.

And let me declare my interest, as I often do when I go on this wicket, that I am a boy of Southampton soil, who had a great-grandmother whose property was compulsorily acquired to do that to make sure that there was a product on that hill for the purpose of tourism. Emily Bascome . . . not . . . Emily Bascome was her daughter. The property of Emily Burrows Hall, my great-grandmother, mother of my grandmother, Ivy, was compulsorily acquired in Southampton for the building of that property.

So, to be able to say that even if you cannot get 100 per cent correct everything you do, but to say that we have come to a point where the largest amount of investment in the country has taken place to realise a project of such, I am here to say that I am proud of that. I am proud to have been a part of making sure that at this time in excess of . . . and somebody might correct me on this. More than \$300 million, more than a quarter of a billion dollars, maybe closer to half a billion dollars will be injected into this economy because of decisions to make sure that we increased our hotel stock and had a flagship hotel property return to Bermuda. And I believe that over the years we have seen that progression taking place.

I believe, in a mindful world, that we will take the opportunity to look at the glass as half full rather than finding all the reasons why to look at the glass as half empty. And because I have been doing a little bit of . . . I am not making excuses for having to navigate a little bit in Hamilton Parish because of all that rain and what is been left, my water hazards that exist. But it is not lost on me that as I navigated other countries, including the motherland, they have issues with roads as well. And so, we are not too dissimilar to many other jurisdictions that have to navigate through periods of fiscal financial challenges.

I believe we have done that, you know. I believe that since 2017, the Government of which I was elected to in 2017, has become more fiscally prudent, conservative enough to be able to pay down the debt, but responsible enough to be able to look after seniors and social programmes. And I believe you will see more, because I believe more has to be done in that area.

But I think you will get it and you are getting it more here than the persons who would look at the glass as half empty. And come and, you know, be able to provide that type of dialogue to be able to let persons not focus on how significant it is that we made a decision to move forward and have the date certain, or date near certain, where we can look and see groups coming to this Island to Southampton.

And that was a decision that was first made in the 60s when the Southampton Princess was first built, and it was accompanied by another development, a development at Port Royal Golf Course, which allowed *Time* magazine and all those big convention groups that used to come. And what you have seen in recent years is redevelopment there where we have a product there that hosts, that provides global awareness where the reintroduction of the Southampton Princess will bring people who will look to a world-class facility, and it encourages other facilities to upgrade. And where do we see that? Well, we would see that at Elbow Beach, wouldn't we? You see The Loren [at Pink Beach] on stream has now looked West, and we are grateful for that.

And I am sure, I am sure that the Opposition can take some credit for their involvement in properties

such as The Loren and down there in St. George's. But let me just go to St. George's and herald something that a young Bermudian invested in. Hillcrest Boutique Hotel. Ms. Veronica Gordon. A lady who, in my estimation, is a visionary when it comes to development, because it is not our first rodeo with development. And she has an eye to be able to look a property and see potential beyond it. And she has looked at a property which has great historical value for the Town of St. George's.

And I knew Ms. [Ellen] Trew Robinson, who had two sons that were actually connected to this House of Assembly. The former of the sons, Delaey Robinson, and also Mr. Cecil Clarke, right? Representing the Progressive Labour Party. So that property came of great historical significance. But Ms. Veronica Gordon saw what could be done in the modern context of what visitors look for, combining elegance with privacy, providing the type of property that would fit well within a town where you can walk to everything.

So, within the Town of St. George's, you now have three hotel properties. I have also said that in the East End in particular, with Grotto Bay [Beach Resort & Spa] being in the Parish of St. George's as well. And Castle Harbour being partially . . . Castle Harbour, you can . . . the Tucker's Point sitting on Castle Harbour being partially in St. George's Parish. The Mid Ocean Club is partially in St. George's Parish as well. And The Loren being next door, you know.

You know, I voted for independence. We have everything there but an airport to, you know, consider going independent ourselves, you know. But I say that tongue-in-cheek to say that, you know, we have an opportunity to market ourselves very jealously with the three golf course properties that we have in Bermuda, representing about 40 per cent of that product on Island right there in the East End. And I see interest growing.

I often say, and I did not . . . I learned this on the doorstep many years ago. And I often herald what the late David White, editor of the *Royal Gazette*, told me when I used to canvass him. He used to say, *Kim, never lose sight that St. George's was always a working town. It was the first capital of Bermuda.* Commerce is a bedrock. Commerce in St. George enables persons not to have to commute to Hamilton to work or have the choice not to.

I was one of those persons coming to St. George's in 1985, opening up one of the larger, . . . becoming one of the larger employers there. When I came to St. George's, a town that my grandfather actually lived in when he was a boy, John Anderson, my grandfather, and his siblings lived in St. George's as well. A lot of people do not know that, but I have to drop that in every now and then. But we Andersons are connected to the ocean.

And the connections between Somerset and St. George's are not just Cup Match, you know. It is because it was easier to get to the West End and Dockyard and back to those two maritime areas by boat than it was by land. And so, you know, you will see Swans

that are in St. George's that look just like Swans in Somerset. Sometimes that is not by accident, you know. I mean, you know, not everybody knows those types of things. Well, but that does not, that is not too dissimilar with many, many folks.

What I am here to say is that in many aspects in tourism, we have more to celebrate and more to look forward to in a positive way than what sometimes we focus on.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as I said on the congrats, I gave congratulations to the movement of Lord St. George. I declare my interest. In the 1990s I would have been one of those young persons who made history by walking down on the square in St. George's. And I see today the young people have changed their mindset, have embraced the visiting lodges in Bermuda. You could only wear St. George's colours there. They have opened it up where persons can come from, and Bermuda has more everything per square mile than anywhere in the world. More golf courses, more churches, more bars, more Masonic lodges. And they opened it up to embrace everybody.

But when they did that, they invited folks from The Bahamas who come, they invited folks from New York who come, they have invited persons from Canada who come, they invite people from the UK to come. And what you are seeing now is the Peppercorn Ceremony, which celebrates the lodges, one lodge, now 200 in Bermuda embracing Freemasonry and all lodges through St. George's, inviting people to Bermuda for cultural tourism.

And I am here to say that celebrating cultural tourism, celebrating sports tourism, celebrating the arts and tourism, celebrating educational tourism, celebrating medical tourism, where you are connecting people on Island and organisations on Island with their connections overseas is where we need to put our monies. I have been saying it, I believe it, I know it to be true, I have participated in making it to prove certain.

In 1957, a younger man came to Bermuda and opened a hotel on that Southampton coast that I grew up on, Pompano Beach. Mr. Lamb, his sons are around my age now, and they participated in sports tourism par excellence. They have a template. I want to tell you that around 1999, when I got out of the business, my assistant, Alex Medeiros, a very progressive young man (I am very proud of him), living in South Carolina, who was one of my apprentices, took that event, took our events that we transported from Castle Harbour to St. George's, and took it up there. And those events still go on today.

When you invest in relationships, when you invest in the people in Bermuda who have connections overseas you will end up with a Newport to Bermuda, Annapolis to Bermuda, a Race Week, a Pompano Couples, a Pompano Ladies. You will come up with events that stand the test of time.

And in my final minute, I want to say, when it comes to honours, there is a gentleman that stands out

far most to me. And I declare my interest, I love golf. But Bob Carrero from Glebe Hill, in Tucker's Town, took it upon himself during COVID-19 to say that this Bermuda event, which is the oldest pro-amateur golf event in the world, will not die. And with only eight teams he made sure that that tournament remained continuous. Up until December of last year, he had over 75 four-somes with family members of some of the most iconic clubs in the entire globe. And that is no mean feat. Why? Because he loves Bermuda, and he has international connections that he was not afraid to leverage on behalf of his beloved Bermuda.

And I am saying that that template is the same template of Race Week. It is the same template that I have seen exercised in many other sporting and cultural events that stood the test of time in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I will do my part with the breath left in my body to try to make that a reality, connecting us with the people that love Bermuda, finding people, more people, to fall in love with Bermuda through the people of Bermuda, both in Bermuda and around the world.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.
Does any other MP?
Mr. Weeks.

HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I OF ETHIOPIA FIRST REIGNING KING TO VISIT BERMUDA

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my time here in this Honourable Chamber, every now and then there is this speech, especially on the motion to adjourn, where sometimes somebody should just drop the microphone and we go home for the evening.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, that is the way I felt when my colleague from Public Works spoke on the history of [Emperor] Haile Selassie [of Ethiopia]. I am one of those that, as an MP for Back O' Town, so to speak, it's a large Rasta population. So, I got an earful when people said, *Well, the King that came, King Charles [III] was not the first to come*. And I could not have articulated any better, even if I had practiced what my colleague has done. So, hats off to him for that brilliant, brilliant history lesson, and I am glad others—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes. Yes. Okay.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: And right. Well, actually, yes, peace and love.

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: But, Mr. Speaker, before I go on to my remarks, I want to also mention that a lot of us, some of us on this side of the floor, do have some Azorean connections, some Azorean roots. Yes. And I proudly say I am one of them. Right?

And I said without reservation that, you know, before time and we were separated, when the Blacks and Portuguese were separated, most of us lived in the same communities. You know, and as a result, I have a great-grandmother that was from São Miguel. Okay?

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: So, moving right along, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it is always, it is always humbling when we talk about the road carnage. And that is one thing that I feel that our House,—our House on either side—is united on. So, this is not to criticise anyone, but just to agree that we have some real carnage that we have to address.

And we have to be clear that this is not a new phenomenon. We have had people die on the roads almost at one a month for years on average. Life-altering accidents have been happening for years. And I must stress that a lot of times when we talk about the road deaths and the road carnage, we talk about it as being a young-person's event. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. People get in these accidents, either life-altering or losing their lives, from every age group, just about, in Bermuda. You know, so it is more than just our youngsters.

But what I want to say, just as a point of clarification, and not only for the Member from I think, constituency 23 . . . constituency 22. Well, 22 or 23.

An Hon. Member: Twenty-three.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Twenty-three.

I just want to make something clear, Mr. Speaker. This Government has pledged for a couple of years now in one of our Throne speeches to address the speed on the roads. We now have put money toward it over the last 18 months.

We have a working group from TCD, the Bermuda Police Service, the Attorney General's Chambers. And what we are doing is how we change legislation so that when we are fully operational with these speed cameras, tickets are going to be able to be issued electronically through email or via people's phones. So, I am saying to be clear that the antiquated system that we talked about is on the verge of being no more.

The current cameras we have, what we are testing, licence plate recognition. So, there are some things that this Government is doing—not talking about doing, Mr. Speaker, but we are actually doing—to enhance the capability and the assistance of the Bermuda Police Service in doing their job. But I want to stress too that it is a community effort, Mr. Speaker, that is

needed. It is going to be more than enforcement that is going to fix the carnage on the road.

BERMUDA DAY

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Now, having said that, Mr. Speaker, my contribution on the motion to adjourn today was none of that. As the Minister responsible for National Security, what I wanted to talk about in the motion to adjourn was the upcoming Bermuda Day holiday. And always around this time I have tried to rise to my feet and talk about the holiday that is coming up. And I am not talking about the holiday as the Minister, because I, too, am one of those revellers who is out there enjoying myself during the Bermuda Day holiday.

We enjoy the culinary festivity and different camps that we may come across. We enjoy the Gombays, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy, too, that old saying, *letting your hair down*, if not regularly, but there are certain occasions that one wants to be just a part of the partying, the festivity, enjoying the Bermuda Day holiday.

But in saying that, it is incumbent of me to say that safety has to be a part of this. We have to look out for one another. We have to enjoy our culture. This year's theme, I think, is For the Culture. It is a brilliant theme because that could help us recognise and realise that this is more than one big party. It is really about us celebrating each other, who we are, but not without understanding that it is our duty to look out for each other.

Holidays do not give us a right to all of a sudden say, okay, we can ride or drive any way we want. Alcohol and drugs are still a no-no. So, as the Minister responsible for Security, like others, I want to enjoy myself. But I want us to enjoy it peacefully, Mr. Speaker. Peacefully, without any carnage on the street, without any violence in our communities.

But we can enjoy ourselves and keep each other in mind. Safety is utmost, and I wish everyone a good and safe Bermuda Day holiday weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, would you like your 20 minutes?

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

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

So, Mr. Speaker, several of the speakers tonight have spoken about the safety and lack of safety on our roads, and I thank the Minister for what he just said.

The issue that we have has been said a couple of times; it is multifaceted. This behaviour is not new. Bermuda's had bad behaviour on its roads for a really long time. If you go back through history, road deaths have happened on our roads for an extended period of time.

In the era that some of us grew up in, pack racing was the thing that everybody was complaining about. Large packs of bikes racing really fast all around the Island. But as we became more busy, our roads became more busy, pack racing seemed to go away. But some of that behaviour has now become an individual behaviour. And it is personal responsibility that we have to actually talk about.

Because you can legislate. We can put in all kinds of rules and regulations and punishments, and we can even, as the Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport] was saying, we can have initiatives to communicate and have whole programmes to educate our population on changing the behaviour. But what it is going to come down to is personal responsibility because many of the people that are behaving in the way that they are, are not actually going to listen regardless of the changes that we make.

And I think it's important that this isn't a blame game. I think everybody in this Chamber agrees that this behaviour has to change. One more death on our roads is too many. But when you look at some of the enforcement that we put in, we have sobriety checkpoints. Mr. Speaker, we announce the sobriety checkpoints in advance. And people complain that we do that because they feel it makes better sense if we just have the sobriety checkpoint. But Mr. Speaker, after a long weekend—with advance notice that we are going to have sobriety checkpoints—the statistics say 20-something people get pulled over after either drinking or, you know, being intoxicated by other substances. So, personal responsibility. Once again, they are not paying attention to the things that we are saying.

These decisions that we make have to change. Some of it will be enforcement. Some of it means that we are going to have to increase penalties. We are going to have to have more ways of enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes when we point out some of these things, it comes across like we are challenging. I think it is really just together we need to have solutions because in this Chamber we do not want to see this continue.

From a policing standpoint, at one point in Bermuda, there were over 30 officers that were involved in the cycle unit or traffic. The Minister can correct me with exact details, but that was about the number, and now I believe that number is around six. But that is because policing has changed, and the police have had to move into other areas. And that is why you do not see the police everywhere dealing with the traffic. But if you cover the roads with police the behaviour does not seem to change. We have a road death, and the very next day there are 12 accidents.

No one listened to what happened on the radio. No one paid attention to what we have said in this Chamber. Family members tell our young people, or not so young people, before they leave that night, *you got to look out on the road*, and the behaviour does not change. High speed plus being intoxicated, and

probably the thing that we do not talk about the most is cell phones. When you see cars that are flipped over, a lot of times that is not just intoxication; that's because they were not paying attention to the road at all because they were looking at a phone. They got to get that last text in, but it might be their last text.

We have to change the behaviour of our people. We have got to educate our young people by not just having policing but having every single person in our community making sure that you are talking to our youngest of young, that that behaviour has to change.

But Mr. Speaker, how many of us have seen people overtaking speeding with a young person on the bike with them? What lesson are they teaching that young person? When they turn 16, there is no way their behaviour is going to be any different than what they learned from the time they were little. So, when we are talking about our culture, we have to make sure that we are changing our culture on the roads.

And I thank the Minister because it is not just the culture on the roads that is harming our people. Every time we get next to one of our big celebrations, we have people who end up with headaches, and then the violence increases. And instead of preparing for the parade, or preparing for the half-marathon, or preparing for being with family and friends, there are people in our community who are preparing to create carnage. Our community. They are not worrying about the celebrations and thinking about our heritage and what we are celebrating. They are thinking about how to hurt other people from our community.

And all of these things are linked up. So, we cannot be up here blaming each other. What we have to do is figure out how we can work together to use every possible solution to change the behaviour. Because the last thing I want is to come back after everybody's celebrating Bermuda Day for us to be giving more condolences. To be visiting people in the hospital because they have been injured because of the behaviour on our roads or the behaviour with the violence in our neighbourhoods.

This is an opportunity next Friday for us to celebrate with our community. For us to celebrate with our friends and family. For us to celebrate what is the best of Bermuda. Celebrate our culture. Bermuda is another world. And I mean that in the positive way that my father wrote that song. Not the behaviour that it has become where they say Bermuda is another world in a negative term. That frustrates me the most. Because that is not the Bermuda that I think anybody in this room wants to see, Mr. Speaker.

We have to elevate our behaviour. We have to expect more of each other. We have to look out for our neighbours. And we have to have personal responsibility. That means take a taxi. That means prepare for how you are going to get home. And that means when you see an argument escalating, pull your friend aside. Take the time to talk to that person and see if you can cool down those heads. And when you know that the

person next to you potentially had one too many, take the time to talk to them. That might be the life you save. That is the responsibility of how this country was built, taking care of each other. And we know that it can still happen regardless of all the protections, regardless of all the things that we want to have happen. But if we all try, that is how we are going to make our community whole.

BERMUDA DAY

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, I want to [wish] every person that has been preparing for the half-marathon good luck in the upcoming week. All the people who have been preparing for the parade, I am hoping that we have beautiful weather so that you can put on the show for our community. And all the family members who have been thinking about the food and festivities that they are going to have. And as the Minister said, all of us will be partaking in our different ways. But if you are going to have a little cold libation, make sure you are doing it safely, that you are not putting yourself and others at risk, that you are not getting to the point where you are not in control. These are the things that we can do for ourselves that help us to help our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish every person in this Chamber, every person that is listening and our entire community a very wonderful Bermuda Day coming up. And let's make it safe. And let's celebrate Bermuda and Bermuda's culture. And next time that we are in this House of Assembly, I am hoping that we do not have to have any of those negative comments and any of those things where we are giving condolences. Instead, we should be talking about all the wonderful celebrations.

So, to you, Mr. Speaker, and everybody else, have a wonderful Bermuda Day and let's make it safe. Thank you.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To you, Mr. Speaker, to my fellow colleagues, and to all of the listening audience. On Thursday, May 7th, we gathered for the National Day of Prayer. This was a moment set aside, not for politics, but for what has always held this country together at its deepest level. Our recognition that we are accountable to someone higher than ourselves.

The National Day of Prayer falls within Heritage Month, and that is no accident. For our heritage is not only in our languages, our traditions, and our struggles. It is in the faith that carried our foreparents through them.

In years past, faith was central to public life. It shaped our schools, our communities, and the way we

spoke to one another across our differences. Prayer has always opened Parliament, but it was also taught in homes and in our schools. It was lived out in the way that our neighbours treated one another. When faith was at the centre, certain things followed naturally. There was a shared expectation of honesty, of keeping your word, of respecting your elders, of protecting the vulnerable. Duty came before self. Restraint was seen as strength and not weakness.

As that centrality has faded from public view, we see the cost in the daily life in this country. We see a decline in morals. We see a decline in respect for one another. We see a decline in the basic civility that allows a society to function. We see disrespect towards authority. Towards institutions. And disrespect toward each other has become commonplace.

Trust erodes when there is no shared standard beyond personal preference. The National Day of Prayer was a chance to pause and name that connection again. I just heard the Opposition Leader ask for a solution to the challenges that we are facing in this community. And I would offer, and I read the Scripture is found at Philippians 4: 6 through 8: "Do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus."

It further goes on to say, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent, if anything is praiseworthy, think about such things."

This is a call to faith, to prayer, and to the words that we speak about one another and about our future. It reminds us that the health of a nation depends not only on its laws, but on the hope and character of its people. It is not about imposing one tradition on all. It is about remembering that a nation without reverence becomes a nation without restraint. When we restore prayer to its place, not just in this Chamber when we start in the morning, but in our homes and in our communities, we restore the moral foundation that makes freedom possible and makes citizenship meaningful.

So today, let us pray for this Parliament, for wisdom beyond our own. Let us speak positively about the future of this, our Island home. Refuse to let cynicism drown out our hope. Let us pray for our communities, for healing where division has taken root. And let us pray for ourselves that we may restore the faith and character that define our heritage and must define our future. May our heritage and our culture be remembered not only in song and dress and in celebration, but in the faith that built it and in the hope we choose to speak into our tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a very happy Bermuda Day to everyone. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Minister, you have your 20 minutes.

BERMUDA DAY (Premier's well wishes)

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier could not be here to close us out because he had an engagement, but he wanted to express the sentiments of everyone having a happy Bermuda Day. He hopes that everyone has an enjoyable day, use it as for opportunity of camaraderie and sharing the best of who we are on that particular day.

I think we did all the sentiments of the Opposition Leader who has an expectation of that day being a joyous day and one that we can collectively celebrate together. I know that, for me, it is an important date in my calendar. You know, the people from the East and the West, their day is Cup Match. But for us in the city . . . I may not be able to get a spot around St. George's Field or Somerset Field, but I definitely have a spot in town. And so, I use that day to wake up early, set up my camp and have a full day with my family and friends. And I am wishing everybody a prosperous day. For those persons who are participating, certainly we will be there to applaud you as you come through. And I just think that we approach the day with the appropriate spirit, one of togetherness and unity.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, those were the remarks that the Premier wanted me to express.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: So, whose camp? Your camp or his camp?

Hon. Jason Hayward: But certainly—

The Speaker: I am only teasing you—

Hon. Jason Hayward: My camp. But I want to do a strategic pivot right now in terms of the fact that—

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]

Hon. Jason Hayward: I was going to speak today about the lost opportunity for us to collectively come together and talk about the positive ratings that Bermuda has actually achieved. And there will be some time for us to speak about the positive ratings and how that trickled on into the everyday household, because there is a connection. And I believe that you cannot detach the two in terms of the work that the Government is

doing, the financial position, the assessment of economic plans moving forward, and how that actually would then benefit the people of Bermuda. And so there is going to be an opportunity to do so.

But today I really want to, and I do not know how to approach this. I want to be guided. If a Member of Parliament, especially a Minister, deliberately and knowingly lies to Members of Parliament and lies in this House, that could result in that person being asked to resign from their position, correct?

The Speaker: There is a Ministerial [Code of] Conduct, rules that dictate how Members should conduct themselves. And I think if a Member, any Member, but particularly a Minister, brings a known untruth (put it that way), and misleads the House with that untruth, yes, that is a serious offence.

MALICIOUS RUMOURS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you.

On January 21st, I received a forward. It reads, "So they tell me Jason Hayward's wife has left him due to abuse. His girlfriend before this one left him too for the same reason. He is an abuser of women and cannot keep his hands to himself, making decisions about the country because of family connections in the PLP."

I then put my hand forward to challenge the Leadership of the Party.

A voice message was then sent out. In that message, it articulated the same thing, that Jason Hayward is a woman beater and he has a police record to support it. That is an unsubstantiated, malicious rumour.

Everybody I have talked to about it says, *Hayward, do not address it. Let it go away.* But they don't have to live what I have to live.

Mr. Speaker, I wake up every morning and try to do my best for the people of this country. I have dedicated 22 years of my life to public service and helping people, and serving people, and helping communities. And for whatever reason, evil within our community would determine that they are hell bound on destroying my character. I have never engaged in domestic violence. I am not a woman beater, and I have never abused a woman. And it is sad that I have to say that. Even after saying that, half the country is not going to believe what is actually being said.

So here is the reality, Mr. Speaker. If anybody comes with any evidence, a police report, a medical report, a doctor's report, an individual who I have been in a relationship with in the past, if they come forward and say that I engaged in domestic violence, I will resign from Parliament immediately. If they bring the information to you, Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to remove me from this House for lying to the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes in life, things are more than politics. I am here to protect my own integrity. It even hurts me more than Members of this House will

continue to spread that rumour without even trying to determine whether or not there was truth to it.

Mr. Speaker, they tell me, and I understand, that politics is a dirty game. I understand that. I put myself forward to be a candidate for the leadership of this country. I did not expect to endure this. But people say that I should continue to expect more. Well, as long as mistruths are said about my name, I will continue to defend myself. I am not expecting the world to defend me, but I will defend myself. It is wrong. It is unfortunate that I have to go through this. But so be it. And this journey will make me stronger. And I won't be deterred by the negativity that people have to spew. But if I stand in this House and I tell women that I am an ally as it pertains to domestic violence, I simply cannot stand here and be a perpetrator as well. That is not part of my character.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to conclude. But I am serious. If any evidence is brought forward that I engaged in any of those activities, I will resign my position as a Member of Parliament.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do adjourn to May 29th, 2026.

The Speaker: Actually, actually, let me just take a minute.

Take a seat for a minute.

Minister, even though the Premier had actually read the comments for you, the person who moved the motion is the one who closes it.

So, we will close if no other speaker, in a sense. So, I have to ask if there are any other speakers. Had you opened it knowing he would not come here, you could have closed it. But I have to do the due process.

The due process is, are there any Members who wish to speak?

There are no other Members to speak.

With that, now I will adjourn the House. The House will stand adjourned until the 29th of May.

Before I hit the gavel, I just want to add my sentiments to those that have been expressed about the up-and-coming holiday. We know what Bermuda Day means to all of us. A good time to relax and celebrate, enjoy the camaraderie of Bermudians and our guests in the country. But it is also a time for us to always practice safety. And when I say safety, I speak mainly to the roads, because it does not make celebrating during the day and overindulging and then trying to drive home that night and injure yourself or others.

So be cautious, be careful. As the Opposition Leader was saying, if we notice one of our friends or family members who seems to have had a bit too much, don't encourage them to drive. Take the keys from them. Give them a ride home. We want everybody to enjoy it without any negativity of having to be injured through unnecessary acts of driving on our roads when they are intoxicated.

But not only that, if at any time we see any violence that may take place, anybody getting heated, let us try and just bring the temperature down around us and those around so that everyone can go home feeling like this was a very fun and enjoyable time with their family and friends. And no acts of unnecessary acts taking place that should not have been part of our Bermuda Day celebration.

With that, I encourage everyone to enjoy the holiday. Those who are running, as one who's run many times in the past, I know what it means. I hope they all have a good day on that race and encourage us to encourage our runners when we see them come by. Not only the senior runners in the Somerset Taunton, but as one who sponsors the junior race, I encourage us all to encourage our young people who do the last two miles into Hamilton Peace Park as well.

With that said, have a very merry . . . is it merry? Very enjoyable (I think the wrong season) holiday of Bermuda Day.

The House now stands adjourned.

[At 5:53 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 29 May 2026.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
29 MAY 2026
10:03 AM**

Sitting Number 36 of the 2025/2026 Session

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, everybody.

Several Hon. Members: Good morning.

The Deputy Speaker: The [Deputy] Clerk will lead us off in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mrs. Kara A. Beale, Deputy Clerk]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, the House is now open.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: I hope that was loud enough.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Deputy Speaker: We now have confirmation of Minutes, and I am just letting you know that the Minutes of 26 May *[sic]* are being deferred. Sorry, 15 May 2026 are being deferred.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Deputy Speaker: I just want the House to know that the Speaker and the Clerk are attending a conference at the [2026] Commons and Overseas Territory Speakers' Conference in the Cayman Islands and are therefore absent today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER
PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019—ANNUAL
REPORT 2025/26**

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 Annual Report \[2025/26\]](#).

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
I call on the Minister of Tourism, Sports, Community Affairs *[sic]* . . .

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

The Deputy Speaker: I knew it was something . . . I just got . . .

[Laughter]

**TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEWOOD
BERMUDA) ORDER 2026**

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Tourism Investment \(Rosewood Bermuda\) Order 2026](#) proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017 together with written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
I call on the . . . oh, the same Minister. Go.

Hon. Owen Darrell: [Minister of] Tourism [and] Transport, Culture and Sport, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

BERMUDA AIRPORT AUTHORITY 2023/24 ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Owen Darrell: I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda Tourism . . . sorry, the [Bermuda Airport Authority Annual Report 2023/24](#).

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Petitions, there are none. Statements by Ministers and—

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister, sorry for overlooking you.

REGISTRY GENERAL, ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Annual Report of the Registry General for the year ended the 31st of December 2025](#) in accordance with section 19 of the Registration (Births and Deaths) Act 1949.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister, and again apologies.

PETITIONS

The Deputy Speaker: As I said before, there are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Premier and Minister of Finance.

DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House on the recently completed Bermuda Digital Finance Forum and to outline the [next steps the Government will take](#) to build on the momentum generated by that event.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda's place in the world has never been determined by our size. Our success has come from our ability to adapt, to innovate, and to recognise opportunities before others do. That is how Bermuda became one of the world's leading insurance and reinsurance centres. We worked with the regulator, listened to industry, protected our reputation,

and built a sector that is now a cornerstone of our economy and internationally recognised for its innovation and regulatory excellence. Digital finance can be the next chapter of that story.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when this Government first set out its FinTech strategy, there were those who questioned whether digital assets had a future and whether Bermuda should be involved at all. Yet while others doubted, Bermuda acted. Today, serious companies have established themselves here, investment has followed, and Bermuda has earned international recognition for its leadership in digital asset regulation and innovation. We have built a respected regulatory framework, attracted world-class businesses, developed a growing digital asset insurance market, and created an environment where innovators, investors, regulators, and policymakers come together to shape the future of finance. And, for the second consecutive year, the Bermuda Digital Finance Forum demonstrated just how far Bermuda has come.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Forum brought together some of the most influential people and institutions shaping the future of finance, technology, regulation, digital assets, artificial intelligence, and tokenised financial products.

The Forum featured participation from Craig Swan, Chief Executive Officer of the Bermuda Monetary Authority, and other officials of the Authority, alongside global digital finance leaders including Dr. Nouriel Roubini; Charles Hoskinson, founder of the Cardano network; Arjun Sethi and David Ripley, co-CEOs of Kraken, one of the world's leading digital asset platforms; Sandy Kaul, Executive Vice President of Digital Assets and Innovation at Franklin Templeton; and leaders from firms and foundations that are choosing Bermuda as a place to build, grow, and operate within our respected regulatory framework.

Across the institutional conference and community programming, more than 1,000 persons registered. The institutional conference itself attracted 524 attendees, including 227 local participants and 297 international participants.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Forum witnessed several important announcements:

- The Stellar Development Foundation announced plans to support a Digital Bermuda Dollar on the Stellar blockchain network.
- The Bermuda Monetary Authority granted Bitcoin Suisse International dual approvals under the Digital Asset Business Act [2018] and the Investment Business Act [1998], allowing that entity to provide regulated digital asset management and investment advisory services from Bermuda.
- Kimber Digital Assets Bermuda ISAC Ltd., also known as Plume, received a Class M Digital Asset Business licence and is positioning Bermuda at the forefront of regulated tokenised

real-world assets. Plume is the largest real world asset platform in the global market, combining the transparency and accessibility of decentralised finance with prudential oversight from a globally respected financial regulator.

- STS Digital Ltd. received a Class F Digital Asset Business licence after progressing through Bermuda's Test, Modified, and Full licensing regime. Significantly, STS chose to relocate its operations from Switzerland to Bermuda, underscoring the growing recognition of Bermuda as a jurisdiction of choice for digital finance businesses seeking regulatory certainty and a credible pathway for international growth.
- Payward, the parent company of Kraken, and Franklin Templeton announced a partnership to expand tokenised financial products for institutional investors.
- The NEAR Foundation announced support for Bermuda as an infrastructure partner for AI-powered public services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these announcements matter because they reflect the continued growth of Bermuda's digital finance sector and the confidence that leading firms and institutions have in our jurisdiction.

Serious companies are choosing Bermuda, global financial institutions are partnering here, new products are being launched from our jurisdiction, and new licences continue to be granted under Bermuda's regulatory framework. Taken together, these developments reinforce Bermuda's position as a trusted, well-regulated, and internationally respected centre for digital finance and innovation.

That position did not happen by accident, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is the result of years of work by the Bermuda Monetary Authority, legislative action by this Honourable House, and a deliberate strategy pursued by this Government. Long before many larger jurisdictions entered this space, Bermuda established a framework that balanced innovation with strong oversight. Today, we are seeing the benefits of that approach as companies continue to choose Bermuda as a place to invest, build, and grow.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the international component of the Forum was important, one of the most encouraging aspects of this year's event was the increased participation of Bermudians.

The community activation at Pier 6 brought together more than 500 people to learn about digital finance, set up digital wallets, and experience digital payments in a real-world marketplace. To encourage participation, the Government sponsored 600 free tickets, allowing Bermudians to attend educational workshops, complete wallet onboarding, and receive up to \$280 in digital assets.

In total, over \$62,000 in digital assets were distributed, including USDC, a US-dollar stablecoin provided through Coinbase and Circle, and Kraken

xStocks, which provide a digital representation of traditional investment products. Participants received Kraken xStocks representing shares in the Franklin Templeton Gold ETF in digital form.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while some of this may sound technical (although I am sure the people who received their digital gold did not feel it was technical) the point is simple. Bermudians were not merely hearing about digital finance; they were using it.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. E. David Burt: They learned how digital wallets work, how digital assets can be received and stored, how payments can be made, and how digital assets can be saved and invested.

Thirty vendors were trained through the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation to accept digital payments. Those businesses successfully accepted payments during the event, and more than \$20,000 in [USDC] was spent with local vendors during the activation and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Entrepreneur Wanda Trott-Murray of Patch That! Bermuda described the experience as *a very smooth and easy transition with no cash in hand*, noting that it simplified payments and allowed her to focus on her business.

Her experience reflects what many participants discovered during the event: that digital payments can be efficient, accessible, and beneficial for both consumers and businesses.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that experience highlights an important question. If Bermudian businesses can accept digital payments, if Bermudians can use digital assets to purchase goods and services, and if regulated financial institutions can operate in this space, then when will the Government create legislative certainty for its own use of digital assets?

The answer, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the Cabinet has approved policy proposals to advance Bermuda's digital finance legislative framework. These proposals will modernise the FinTech Development Fund, update the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act, and amend the Public Funds Act to ensure that digital assets can be accepted and managed under established public finance controls.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the FinTech Development Fund already exists in law, having been established by this Honourable House in 2018. This legislation will be updated so that it can support Bermuda's on-chain economy initiative and provide a mechanism through which contributions can be received and deployed to support education, entrepreneurship, and responsible digital finance development in Bermuda.

The Fund will support local entrepreneurs, training programmes, public awareness initiatives, and projects that help Bermudians participate in this growing sector. It will operate with appropriate governance,

reporting requirements, and oversight. Importantly, at least 50 per cent of monies disbursed from the Fund will be reserved for projects involving companies with majority Bermudian ownership.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the success of Bermuda's digital finance strategy cannot be measured solely by the number of international companies we attract. It must also be measured by the number of Bermudians who are able to participate, build businesses, develop new products and services, and create ownership opportunities within this sector. As Bermuda advances its global leadership in digital finance, Bermudians must have meaningful opportunities to share in the value that this industry creates.

We must also recognise that while Bermuda has made significant progress, there is still more work to do. Some Bermudians who have sought to build businesses in this space have encountered challenges, and while Bermuda's regulatory framework has earned international respect and credibility, we must continue to modernise by creating clearer pathways for local participation while ensuring that Bermudians who are prepared to innovate and invest have the support they need to succeed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Cabinet has also approved updates to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act and the Public Funds Act. These amendments will clarify the Government's authority to accept stablecoins and other approved digital payments for Government services, fees, and obligations, while also modernising the framework governing the investment of public funds so that approved financial instruments may be held and managed in digital form where appropriate. They will confirm the Accountant General's role in establishing practical processes for receiving, managing, reconciling, and auditing those payments and assets.

Financial Instructions will likewise be updated where necessary to ensure that digital payments and digital financial instruments are subject to the same safeguards, accountability, and oversight that already apply to existing forms of payment and investment. These are not new standards, but simply the application of existing public finance controls to modern forms of money and finance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am mindful that some may choose to distort what these changes mean, particularly when they hear references to Government investing in digital assets; however, the reality is much simpler. Many traditional financial instruments are increasingly available in digital form. Treasury bills, money market instruments, and regulated fund products can now be issued, recorded, held, or settled digitally, while remaining subject to the same regulatory, governance, and investment standards that apply today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the same approach that helped make Bermuda a global leader in insurance and reinsurance is now being applied to digital finance.

Today, the results are clear. Sixty-five international companies have chosen Bermuda, global financial institutions are partnering with Bermuda, new financial products are being launched from Bermuda, and Bermudians are participating. At the same time, the Government is putting in place the legal and operational framework necessary to ensure that the benefits of this growth are shared more broadly throughout our economy, creating opportunities for Bermudians to participate, build businesses, develop new skills, and benefit from the success of this emerging sector.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

I now call on the Minister for Housing, Minister, . . . and Municipalities.

GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you. Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with a timely [update on the Government's resolute commitment](#) to addressing one of the most demanding needs facing our community, namely the provision of accessible, high-quality, and affordable housing for the people of Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while certain detached commentators and predictable political critics have recently taken to the pages of the local periodicals—specifically *The Royal Gazette*—to call into question this Government's vision and dedication, let me assure this House and the listening public that we are not distracted. We are focused on delivery.

Let us be completely clear, Madam Deputy Speaker: we are reading critiques from individuals who sat around the Cabinet table for years and failed to deliver the affordable housing Bermuda desperately needed.

An Hon. Member: Like the PLP for 10 years!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now, when the problem has been compounded in part by their years of inaction, they attempt to lecture us through the newspaper columns. While they look backwards and try to score political points, this Government is looking forward and moving dirt. We are advancing a robust, thoroughly evaluated, and fiscally responsible strategy to bring real and lasting relief to Bermudian families.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are those who would have the public believe that a project of this scale should be micro-managed directly from the Minister's desk, or that working through our quangos somehow equates to a lack of oversight. Let me categorically correct that misconception.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let us be clear about how this Government operates. Ministries' structures are about accountability, efficiency, and statutory alignment. The Ministry of Housing and Municipalities is designed to develop policy, establish strategy, and enforce strict regulatory oversight. We are not here to build empires within the civil service or duplicate roles. By directing this work through the established statutory frameworks of the Bermuda Land Management Corporation and the Bermuda Housing Corporation, we are utilising the exact entities that hold the specific legislative mandates, the specialised real estate portfolios, and the technical mechanisms necessary for large-scale delivery.

By pairing our quangos with nimble, specialised private sector entities, and leveraging the invaluable expertise of local engineers, project managers, and technical professionals, we harness the corporate flexibility and precise technical expertise required to manage massive construction and housing portfolios. This structure ring-fences the project commercially, ensures a rigorous separation between policy setting and procurement execution, and allows us these housing initiatives with the speed and strict oversight that the Bermudian public expects.

We are not letting these entities work in silos. Madam Deputy Speaker, project delivery will be a highly coordinated, joint effort overseen by the BHC in strict collaboration with the BLMC. To formalise their relationship both during and after the construction work, a memorandum of understanding is currently being established between BLMC and BHC to explicitly map out roles, responsibilities, procurement guidelines, and project delivery timelines.

This structure allows us to move quickly on a thoroughly vetted strategy. The BLMC has, in collaboration with the BHC and the Ministry, pressed on over the past several months with intense feasibility assessments, site identifications, and engineering evaluations. Traditional Bermudian construction was examined. But, frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is too expensive and takes much too long when our people need housing now.

Following rigorous assessments that included physical site visits to overseas manufacturing facilities and multiple vendor evaluations, precast [concrete] construction was determined to be the absolute best solution for our Island and for our timeframe. It is cost-effective, incredibly fast to assemble, exceptionally durable, and resilient against Bermuda's harsh and varied environmental conditions.

Furthermore, Madam Deputy Speaker, despite what the sceptics are claiming in the media, this is no *untried experiment*. This method has an established and highly successful local track record. It was the exact methodology which was successfully deployed by the BLMC under its former entity, the West End Development Corporation—or WEDCO—

Hon. E. David Burt: Was that around the America's Cup?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, we will get there—to replace the dilapidated and now-demolished Victoria Row buildings. We know it works; we know it lasts, and because the BLMC has already done it, [they] are [the] ideal entity to lead this project. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, let us not forget that—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —if the OBA had not stepped in and scaled back that exact development following the 2012 election—

Hon. E. David Burt: Aah!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —this country would have had an additional 80 affordable homes available for our people well over 10 years ago.

An Hon. Member: Not Cross Island!

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ten years ago!

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am proud and excited to announce that this initial phase of the Affordable Housing Programme will deliver 229 residential units strategically spread across four main sites:

- 24 two-bedroom units in Albert Row, Dockyard;
- 24 three-bedroom units and 12 two-bedroom units in Victoria Place, Dockyard;
- 110 one-bedroom units in Southampton, adjacent to Dr. Cann Park;
- 12 two-bedroom units and 12 three-bedroom units on Tommy Fox Road in St. David's; and
- 35 single-occupancy units retrofitted in the existing Channel House in St. David's, specifically for senior living.

To ensure the highest standards, two premier partners have been identified, each with successful experience in Bermuda and the capability to meet our strict building codes. They are Coastal Precast Systems of Virginia, USA, who will be supporting delivery at Albert Row, Victoria Place, and Tommy Fox Road; and Preconco Limited of Barbados to support the project at Dr. Cann Park II, as we are calling it at the moment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me make one thing abundantly clear to this House and to the critics: Bermudian contractors and service providers will be at

the very heart of this project. Local industry will play a key role in driving the site preparation, civil works, foundations, infrastructure installation, and complete interior fit outs. Channel House will be upgraded entirely by local contractors. We are marrying off-site manufacturing efficiency with a direct, massive investment into the pockets of local workers.

A project of this magnitude requires robust financial backing and commercial discipline, not political rhetoric. I am pleased to inform this House that financing has been fully secured through the Bermuda Commercial Bank and Clarien Bank Bermuda, backed by a Government Guarantee.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the total estimated investment for this initial phase is \$114,750,000.

Hon. E. David Burt: Million! On top of record investments in affordable housing we have already made.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Every single dollar of this investment represents a direct injection into the social fabric and economic future of this country.

Running this work through our quangos does not mean a reduction in oversight. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, it means a more efficient, rigorous, commercially structured process. The BLMC-led procurement framework includes the finalisation of technical design specifications, structured engagement with suppliers, and evaluations based strictly on cost, capacity, code compliance, and delivery timelines. Contract finalisation and mobilisation will remain subject to all necessary approvals under BLMC's purview.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while our overall vision through the Housing Strategy and our commitments for the future are important, I want to make it abundantly clear to this Honourable House and to the listening public: we are not just talking about what we will build.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to share what this Government is doing right now, again through the BHC. There is a lively parallel track of affordable developments in train, approaching the finish line, and being delivered in the background while we hear the criticisms wash by. Let me quiet that noise with some more good news.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this House will recall last week's news about the work at Middletown. It is now officially complete. The BHC is actively working with four Bermudian families to move them into these newly renovated two-bedroom units immediately. And, unlike the unrealistic market prices being charged elsewhere, the rent is set at a fair, truly affordable \$1,400 per month.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is real relief, delivered right now.

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey, hey.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: At the Chelsea houses in St. David's, \$2.7 million have been invested to build five [new] units, consisting of two 3-bedroom units and three 2-bedroom units. The local contractor, Millwood Construction, is working diligently, and I am pleased to confirm that they are on target for completion in July.

The Battery Phase II development, also in St. David's, is in progress, and invests \$3.75 million to deliver another 12 units, consisting of four 2-bedrooms, two 1-bedroom units, and six studio units. This work will be completed between August and September of this year.

Furthermore, Madam Deputy Speaker, new life is being breathed into the Harmony Club [campus] with an extensive, multi-phase regeneration project. Madam Deputy Speaker, \$2.6 million is being invested into Harmony Terrace North to completely repurpose 16 efficiency units.

Hon. E. David Burt: Record amounts of investment.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Whenever we disturb older buildings there are bound to be some unforeseen surprises, and this project is no different. Old ductwork, slabs discovered in ceiling spaces, and the need to shift a wall to create a proper pump room are among the challenges being dealt with. Completion of these works, Madam Deputy Speaker, is targeted for early next year.

Looking ahead into 2027, Harmony Terrace South will see another 16 efficiency units completely retrofitted, with a target completion date in the third quarter of next year. To ensure that the Harmony Club campus is able to adequately serve its tenants, the BHC is spending a further \$360,000 on trenching and essential infrastructure upgrades for BELCO metering, transformers, communications, and piped water to be installed. Materials for this work are arriving on site within the next few weeks. This work is expected to be complete in the third quarter of this year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, despite the absolute nonsense—

An Hon. Member: Nonsense!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —being spun in the media—

Another Hon. Member: Come on.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —you can see that no one is dragging their feet on this side of the House.

Hon. E. David Burt: Nonsense!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We are moving with purpose, we are moving with speed,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —and we are moving to deliver for the Bermudian people. Subject to Planning approvals, contract finalisation, and site preparation, we anticipate breaking ground in or around August of this year. From the moment construction begins, we are looking at an aggressive, highly efficient timeline of approximately 18 months to get Bermudians into these homes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the contrarians write their newspaper columns and try to cast doubt on this Government's capability, we will continue to do the tangible work of the people. We will be continuously engaging with area residents, community groups, and stakeholders every step of the way. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government promised to deliver affordable housing, and through partnership with our quangos, we are doing exactly that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, I would like to acknowledge the sterling efforts of the team at BHC, BLMC and the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities who have been diligently managing these projects, especially Mr. Paul Martin, Mr. Andrew Dias, Mr. Keino Furbert-Jacobs (who is doing five men's jobs at the same time), and Mr. Blake Lambert. I would also like to thank the Affordable Housing Advisory committee for their yeoman work.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: I now call on the Minister of Economy and Labour.

You have the floor.

REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to introduce the [Annual Report of the Registry General](#) for the year ended 31 December 2025. The Registrar General recognises the essential role that vital [statistical] information plays in planning for the provision of services in areas such as tourism, health, education and housing, to name a few, and has performed his duties to a high standard in the recording, collating and presenting of the data to be included in the Annual Report.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with section [19] of the Registration (Births and Deaths) Act 1949, the Registrar General shall, within 90 days after the expiration of each calendar year, compile for publication in such form and manner as the Minister may approve a summary of the births and deaths which occurred during the year, together with a general report on the increase or decrease of the population of Bermuda. Pursuant to section 35 of the Marriage Act 1944, the Registrar General is also required to publish a summary of marriages [conducted] each year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in preparation of the Annual Report, the Registrar has relied on information received from

- the Records Office of the King Edward VII Hospital relating to births;
- local funeral directors, medical practitioners, and the Coroner's Office in relation to deaths;
- local domestic partnership officers in relation to domestic partnerships; and
- from local marriage officers and Masters of Bermuda-registered ships in relation to local and maritime marriages, respectively.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Report, which deals primarily with the vital statistics pertaining to the Island's residential population, [indicates] that there has been a slight increase in the number of births. In 2025, there were 452 births; an increase of 27 over the 425 births recorded in 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the distribution of live births by nationality for 2025, based on information provided by parents at the time of registration of their child's birth, shows that 75.4 per cent, or 341, of the total live births have at least one Bermudian parent. In 2025, 111, or 24.6 per cent, of the births have parents who are both non-Bermudian.

Honourable colleagues are advised that in 2025, Madam Deputy Speaker, 552 deaths were recorded among residents, a decrease from the 602 deaths recorded in 2024. The Report also indicates that there were six deaths in respect of non-resident persons, which brings the total number of deaths recorded for 2025 to 558.

For the year ending 31 December 2025, Madam Deputy Speaker, 273 marriages were performed in Bermuda, a decrease of 56, or 20.5 per cent, from the 329 marriages recorded in 2024. During 2025, marriages between parties who were both non-residents accounted for 95, or 34.8 per cent, of the total of 273. The Report also shows that there were 148 marriages between parties who were both residents and 30 marriages between a resident and non-resident.

Madam Deputy Speaker, marriages are regularly performed aboard 28 Bermuda-registered ships. In 2025, the number of maritime marriages was 490, which represents an increase of 145, or 29.6 per cent, from the 2024 total of 345. The increase is due to efforts of the cruise line industry to expand services for weddings onboard their ships. The cumulative number of

marriages (local and maritime) processed through the Registry General for the year ending 31 December 2025, was 763 as compared to 674 for the year 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Domestic Partnership Act 2018 allows for the formalisation of unions between partners. In 2025, there were four domestic partnership unions recorded. All four domestic partnership unions were between couples who were residents and they were formalised at the Registry General Office.

In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Annual Report provides an illustrative statistical digest of vital events such as [live] births, deaths, stillbirths, marriages, domestic partnerships, adoptions and re-registration of births in Bermuda for the year ended 31 December 2025.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

I now call on the Minister of . . . Minister Furbert. Yes.

HEARING SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAMME

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning and thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I stand before this Honourable House to announce the [Pilot Hearing Support Programme](#).

Hearing is fundamental to how we experience the world. It allows us to connect with others, engage in our communities, and maintain our overall well-being. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1.5 billion people worldwide experience some degree of hearing loss. Hearing loss is defined as the inability to hear as well as someone with normal hearing—typically measured as thresholds of 20 decibels or better in both ears—and can range from mild to profound, affecting one or both ears.

Madam Deputy Speaker, hearing loss can occur at any stage of life. However, it is particularly prevalent amongst older adults. The World Health Organization estimated in 2019 that over 65 per cent of adults aged 60 and older experience hearing loss. In fact, age-related hearing loss is one of the leading causes of years lived with disability globally, and the leading cause amongst adults over the age of 70.

Madam Deputy Speaker, census data, based on self-reporting, often underestimates mild or moderate hearing loss. In 2010, 814 people in Bermuda reported hearing difficulties or complete deafness—775 with difficulties (95.2 per cent) and 39 with complete deafness (4.8 per cent). Of these, 209 (25.7 per cent) said their condition was disabling. Most cases (57.5 per cent) were among those aged 65-plus, and women comprised nearly 57 per cent of disabling cases. Age-group analysis shows hearing difficulties affect all adults, not just seniors. Hearing loss rates were similar across racial groups. However, this information is outdated, highlighting the need for updated data to reflect

current trends and practices. We look forward to updated information following the completion of the 2026 Census, which will support continued planning and ongoing development of this programme.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the impact of hearing loss extends well beyond physical health. It can significantly affect quality of life. Among older adults, untreated hearing loss is strongly associated with social isolation and loneliness. When individuals struggle to hear and participate in conversations, they may begin to withdraw from social situations. Research shows that those who experience hearing loss and do not use hearing aids report higher levels of loneliness, increased rates of depression, and an overall lower quality of life.

Emerging research also highlights a connection between hearing loss and cognitive decline. The Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention identified hearing loss as a [modifiable] risk factor for dementia, particularly when addressed in mid-life. While causation has not been [definitively] established, reduced auditory input may contribute to decreased cognitive stimulation over time, in addition to social isolation, another risk factor for dementia. The Commission recommends that hearing loss be addressed across the life course through both public health strategies and individual action.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the Department of Financial Assistance provides essential support to our community, including coverage for standard hearing aids, gaps still remain. Financial Assistance clients and persons with public or private insurance may still face co-payments for hearing tests, which can discourage uptake. In addition, hearing tests and hearing devices are not covered under the current FutureCare or HIP plans. FutureCare is the largest insurer of our seniors on Island. As a result, many individuals continue to face financial barriers to accessing essential hearing care.

It is in response to the growing body of international evidence and current system gaps that the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors has commissioned a pilot hearing support benefit programme. Through a targeted grant administered by Age Concern, the Ministry will provide support towards the cost of hearing assessments and hearing devices for adults in financial need who are uninsured or underinsured. The programme launched in early May, and applications are available.

Adults requiring support for hearing tests or hearing aids may make application for this benefit programme. Applications will be available from Age Concern and hearing service providers. All applications will be submitted to Age Concern who will assess applicants aged 50 and older, while applications for individuals under 50 will be sent to Ageing and Disability Services for review.

This initiative is designed both to respond to current gaps and to build a clearer understanding of

demand, helping to inform sustainable, long-term solutions. The Ministry of Health is advancing significant work through health reform and universal coverage. Accordingly, this pilot will provide targeted support now while contributing valuable insight for [the Ministry of] Health's broader system development efforts.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our Government is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities, including those experiencing hearing loss, have access to the support and services they need to live healthy and connected lives. We also recognise the importance of prevention, particularly as it relates to reducing the risk of dementia within our community.

We encourage all individuals to protect their hearing and to seek assessment and support as early as possible and make application to the hearing support programme if needed.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

I believe you have a second [Statement], do you?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, I do.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Whenever you are ready you may proceed.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you.

DISABILITY INCLUSION, ADVANCING OF

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak about an issue that goes to the heart of who we are as a country: how we treat persons with disabilities, how we remove barriers to full participation in the community, and how we build a Bermuda that truly works for everyone.

For too long, persons with disabilities in Bermuda have told us, clearly and consistently, that despite existing laws, they continue to face discrimination, exclusion, and barriers that many of us never have to consider. Barriers in public spaces, employment, education, housing, transportation, digital access, and public services to name a few.

To be clear, Madam Deputy Speaker: [disability inclusion](#) is not about charity. It is not about accommodation as an afterthought. It is about dignity, rights, fairness, and respect.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when Bermuda adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we made a statement to the world—and more importantly, to our own people—that persons with disabilities are entitled to full inclusion, equal opportunity, and real participation in every aspect of public life. That commitment was not symbolic. It was a call to action.

Listening to the voices of persons with disabilities and their families has made one thing abundantly

clear: Despite the existence of legislation designed to protect the rights of people with disabilities this is not enough. We are aware improvements must be made, as persons with disabilities continue to experience discrimination and are faced with systemic barriers that impact full and equal participation in society. This is supported by the Human Rights Commission Disability Inclusion Report titled [Nothing about Us, Without Us](#) by underscoring the need for sustained improvements.

This Government is committed to taking decisive action to move from promise to delivery by advancing two pathways concurrently: strengthening and amending existing legislation, while also establishing standalone legislation through a comprehensive Disability Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one pathway prioritises more immediate legislative gains, delivering earlier and tangible benefits for persons with disabilities, while the other provides for comprehensive, system-wide reform of existing standards. This second pathway will require a longer timeframe for the development and implementation of new legislation. It has also been determined that, alongside the advancement of both legislative pathways, a dedicated disability unit will be established.

This disability unit will be a foundational component in driving disability inclusion across Government and throughout our society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the initial phase, the priority is developing the scope and role of the disability unit and establishing the appropriate legal framework that would provide a clear, enforceable statutory mandate to coordinate, monitor, and proactively drive disability inclusion across the public and private sectors. The disability unit will be staffed by a Programme Manager and an Education and Accessibility Officer. The Programme Manager will assist with the development and implementation of standards and guidance to systematically address societal barriers to inclusion. The Education and Accessibility Officer will work to assist stakeholders with implementing accessibility standards, and lead education campaigns to improve public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, inclusion and what inclusion looks like in employment, customer service, public spaces, transportation, and how we communicate information.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Ageing and Disability Services will continue to advance amendments to the Human Rights Act 1981, such as the enhancement of the definition of disability, in addition to identifying, aligning and coordinating proactive enforcement standards under the disability unit within the legislative framework of the Human Rights Act. This ensures our domestic framework aligns with international standards and reflects a modern and more effective approach to inclusion. However, [any] disability-related amendments to the Human Rights Act must be developed in consultation and coordination with existing initiatives underway by the Human Rights Commission.

Madam Deputy Speaker, disability inclusion is not the responsibility of one Ministry alone. I want to repeat that, Madam Deputy Speaker: *disability inclusion is not the responsibility of one Ministry alone*. It touches housing; it touches health, education, transportation, planning, employment, financial assistance, and digital services to name a few. That is why this work is deliberately cross-ministerial. We are breaking down silos and building shared ownership across government.

Just as importantly, this work is being guided by a principle that has been voiced clearly and repeatedly by the disability community: *Nothing about us, without us*. Persons with disabilities are not passive recipients of policy. They are experts in their lived experiences. Their voices must help shape how systems are designed, how services are delivered, and how standards are enforced.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me also say this: Inclusion benefits all of us. And this is why it was extremely important over the past year for Ageing and Disability Services to engage in internal and external consultations with stakeholders, so that this policy direction has the input needed to make the meaningful impact for change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our vision is clear: A Bermuda where persons with disabilities can live, work, learn, and fully participate, without unnecessary barriers, without exclusion, and without having to fight for basic access and equal opportunity.

That is the direction this Government is committed to taking to ensure we strengthen and empower persons with disability to be fully included in all aspects of life in Bermuda, so that no one gets left behind.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

Now we move on to the Ministry of National Security, and I call on the said Minister.

AIRPORT RESCUE AND FIREFIGHTING, COMMISSIONING OF NEW VEHICLES

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, good morning colleagues and listening audience.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda of an important investment in our national emergency response capability. The [Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service has now commissioned](#) four new Rosenbauer PANTHER Airport Rescue and Firefighting crash tenders for deployment at the L. F. Wade International Airport. These vehicles have been received, the required training and familiarisation have been completed, and the new fleet is now in operational service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a significant milestone for the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, for airport operations, and for public safety more

broadly. The L. F. Wade International Airport is Bermuda's principal air gateway. It connects our people to the world, supports our tourism and business sectors, and plays a vital role in the movement of residents, visitors, goods, medical travel, and emergency support.

Madam Deputy Speaker, ensuring that the airport is supported by a strong, reliable, and properly equipped Airport Rescue and Firefighting capability is therefore not optional. It is essential. The commissioning of these four new crash tenders renews a critical frontline asset and replaces ageing specialist vehicles with modern appliances designed specifically for the airport emergency response environment. The previous vehicles had reached the end of their useful service life and were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Replacing them was therefore necessary to reduce operational risk, improve reliability, and ensure that the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service can continue to deliver the specialist response capability required at the airport.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Rosenbauer PANTHER is a highly specialised Airport Rescue and Firefighting vehicle. It is designed to support rapid response, effective firefighting performance, and operational reliability in circumstances where seconds matter.

In an airport emergency, speed, coordination, and capability are essential. These vehicles are built to deliver high extinguishing performance, support safe incident management, and enable firefighters to respond quickly and effectively to aircraft-related incidents.

This new fleet strengthens the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service's ability to meet the response demands associated with airport rescue and firefighting operations. It also supports the continuity of airport operations, which is a matter of national importance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to be clear that acquiring specialist vehicles of this nature is only one part of the work. The successful commissioning of this fleet also required training, familiarisation, operational preparation, and coordination among the relevant personnel. Firefighters and technical staff have completed the required training in the operation and maintenance of the vehicles, allowing them to be fully integrated into frontline response arrangements at the airport. That preparation ensures that the investment is not simply sitting on the apron as new equipment but is actively supporting operational readiness.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this investment reflects the Government's continued commitment to strengthening emergency response infrastructure and supporting the men and women who serve on the front lines. Our firefighters are asked to respond in some of the most challenging and time-sensitive circumstances. They deserve equipment that is fit for purpose, reliable, and capable of supporting the level of service expected of a modern airport rescue and firefighting operation.

The commissioning of these four crash tenders will improve reliability, reduce the operational risks associated with ageing specialist vehicles, and strengthen Bermuda's ability to respond to emergencies at our principal air gateway. Of course, the sustained benefit of this investment will depend on routine maintenance, recurrent training, and sound asset management. Those responsibilities will remain central to ensuring that this fleet continues to serve Bermuda effectively over the medium term.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also wish to acknowledge the leadership and professionalism of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service throughout this process. The service continues to play a vital role in national safety, not only through structural firefighting and emergency response across the Island, but also through its specialist airport rescue and firefighting responsibilities. I extend my appreciation to the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Dana Lovell; the officers and firefighters assigned to airport operations; the technical and support personnel involved in the commissioning process; and all those who contributed to bringing this new fleet into service. Their work ensures that Bermuda remains prepared, responsive and ready to meet the demands placed on its emergency services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the commissioning of these four Rosenbauer PANTHER Airport Rescue and Firefighting crash tenders represents a practical investment in public safety, strengthening emergency preparedness at the L. F. Wade International Airport and ensuring that our firefighters have the specialist equipment required to protect life, support life and support our safe airport operations.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the Minister of Home Affairs, Minister Lightbourne, you have the floor.

CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to report to this Honourable House and the public on the consultation that the Ministry of Home Affairs has conducted on the transition and intention to pursue [full membership in CARICOM](#). That consultation opened earlier this year with the tabling of the Green Paper, *The Story of Us* and the launch of the public campaign.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public engagement has run in two stages; one before the Green Paper and one after. Before publication, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry consulted stakeholders to shape the structure and content of the Green Paper itself, inviting views on the elements that must be included in its contents. After publication, the Ministry opened the consultation to the wider public. That phase has carried

Island-wide town halls, structured sessions with public and private sector bodies, regional associations, faith communities, youth groups and educational institutions, and an online survey at togetherfor-caricom.gov.bm. The town hall series concluded with the final session held last week in St. George's.

Madam Deputy Speaker, across the engagement, the Ministry has heard supportive views, undecided views and opposed views. The questions raised most often concern the cost of membership, the protection of Bermuda's immigration and economic frameworks, and [the] tangible return on a deeper regional position, all of which the Ministry has sought to advance and also reply in detail. The Ministry has also tracked every concern, and its intention is to capture the feedback and its summary and all elements of the consultation as part of the forward published White Paper.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the country will recall, this PLP Government has been open and transparent with the intention to pursue full membership in CARICOM, and with that commitment, the Ministry of Home Affairs has advanced this important public policy discussion.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the ties that bind Bermuda to the Caribbean predate every policy paper. They begin at the water. The same Atlantic that brought our ancestors here brought their ancestors there. The same hands that worked Bermudian land worked Caribbean land. The same names that appear in our parish registers also appear in theirs. Madam Deputy Speaker, our community carries Caribbean ancestry in its bones, and the question before us is not whether Bermuda is connected to the Caribbean, but rather if it values its development enough to stand not just in title but in work, alongside other developed nations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the journey to this moment is not sudden. It has been a steady walk. The Caribbean Community was founded in 1973 by the Treaty of Chaguaramas. Bermuda joined as an associate member, as this Honourable House has heard, in 2003, and for more than 20 years Bermuda has been on the margins of regionalism, believing that we have meaningfully contributed. We have provided and spoken without voting, and we have been counted without our perspective truly being weighed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, signed in 2001, opens up with a preamble that sets the guiding framework for the association. It defines a commitment to deepening regional economic integration, a commitment to sustained economic development built on international competitiveness, commitment to coordinating economic and foreign policies, commitment to functional cooperation, and a commitment to enhance trade and economic relations. These are the operating principles under which Bermuda was seeking to deepen its participation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, since the release of the Green Paper, the Ministry has engaged in a deliberate cross-section of Bermuda. The following

stakeholder consultations have been completed and are scheduled before the close of this phase: We have held three public town hall meetings held in the central, west, and east parishes; meetings with Bermuda College and their senior executives; executive teams of the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce; OUTBermuda; Barritt's Bermuda; and the Association of Bermuda International Companies [ABIC]. In each engagement, the Ministry has presented the Green Paper, answered questions, and recorded views for the record.

Madam Deputy Speaker, parallel to the stakeholder consultations, the Ministry has rolled out a public education campaign across digital platforms, broadcast media, and community venues. *The Story of Us* has reached households, business owners, and community institutions across the Island. Business owners have named the benefits of the regional market access. Educators have named the benefit of regional academic mobility. Cultural institutions have named the benefit of regional artistic exchange.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, the campaign has carried interviews with counterparts from other British Overseas Territories, those same counterparts who have shared their intentions to deepen integration themselves with CARICOM, and to follow the path that Bermuda is now walking. The region is moving, and Bermuda is not moving alone, or not seeking to move alone.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the Ministry educates, informs, and listens, it also notes the messages of division that have surfaced each time the country seems to seek to advance. The Omnibus Survey records that 53 per cent of Bermudians were in support of CARICOM in 2024. The same voices that work to shape opinion against full membership also insist on an unnecessary referendum. They trade in speculation about economic, social, and constitutional consequences that the Green Paper has already addressed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a disparity in this debate that deserves to be named, that there are Bermudian companies that have already expanded quietly through the Caribbean region. They have opened offices in regional capitals, they have moved goods across regional ports, and they have built service lines across market access. They have done all of this while sharing the value of regional access. Yet some of those same operators have spoken privately to [the] Government about the value of that access, and then turned to the public, however, to spread mistruths about CARICOM.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Ministry will not name them today, but the record speaks for itself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that disparity carries a deeper pattern, and that is the inherent desire in some quarters to confuse and to deter ordinary Bermudians from accessing the very value that a small

number of well-placed actors have been already unlocking exponentially. That pattern is not new in this country. It is a pattern that has kept opportunity narrow for generations. This Government is committed to widening the gate, not to guarding it for the few.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on the question of tangible return, the consultation has surfaced concrete evidence, but invites the declaration of policy which informs laws, the way that we evolve in governance that to date we have not successfully advanced. We heard in our consultations of vehicles procured for the Royal Bermuda Regiment from Jamaica that were sourced cheaper than the average price, and the equivalent prices in the US and other jurisdictions. That is just one purchase, and the savings speak plainly. The Caribbean Community's [25] by 2025 regional food production agreement, led by Guyana and partner states, is exactly the kind of supply arrangement Bermuda is shut out of as an associate Member. Bermuda imports roughly 90 per cent of its food, and a seat and an ability to have a decision in food and regional security is not abstract. It matters to grocery bills, and it matters to Bermudians.

Madam Deputy Speaker, fear has travelled alongside this debate for generations. The fearmongering that has surfaced draws on that inheritance. It tells Bermudians that free movement would overwhelm us. It tells Bermudians that [Caribbean Single Market and Economy] (CSME) will compromise our economy, and it tells Bermudians that full members will erode our sovereignty and shake our constitutional order. None of those claims [withstand] the Green Paper, and none of those claims withstand the record of associate membership. They are the same warnings, dressed in new language with new actors, that have been used in this country before to keep Bermuda separate from their natural family.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government refuses to govern by inherited fear. We respect every honest concern, and we will answer every honest question. We will not let old posture decide new generational future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let the record be precise about what full membership does and does not change. Bermuda retains full control over its borders. Bermuda retains its work permit system. Bermuda will not adopt free movement of persons under the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, and this is a Government-settled negotiating position.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the precedent is real, and it is working. The Bahamas has been a full member of CARICOM for 43 years. Across those decades, The Bahamas has had strict national control over its immigration and its financial services sector. A full member can guard its borders and its economy, and this is the same negotiating frame that applies to Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the cost has been plainly spoken about loudly, so let it be spoken about accurately. Bermuda's anticipated contribution as a full

member, anticipated contribution, is \$2.28 million. And that is circulated in public commentary as a theoretical maximum for a member adopting the full Treaty of Chaguaramas and the full Single Market and Economy. This is not the path that Bermuda is on. Bermuda's contribution remains subject to the terms and negotiations of the Government and the CARICOM Member states.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public consultation on the Green Paper closes on Sunday, 31 May [2026]. Until that date, members of the public may review the Green Paper, complete the survey, and submit feedback through the dedicated portal at togetherfor-caricom.gov.bm.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Every submission received will be reviewed by the Ministry.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, should this step advance, the decision should not rest . . . does not rest with Bermuda alone. Each Member State of the Caribbean community will need to accept Bermuda's application. That is a standard extension process under the path of the Treaty, and the Ministry has engaged regional partners in that spirit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the close of the consultation phase, the Ministry will review the feedback from the public, from the Legal Affairs Committee in the Secretariat, and from the United Kingdom. The Ministry will then prepare the White Paper that sets the Government's settled position. That White Paper will incorporate the consultation feedback and the legal review of the Treaty reservations identified for Bermuda's specific constitutional circumstances. Final terms remain subject to negotiation with the CARICOM Secretariat, to the agreement of all full members of the Community. The White Paper will be tabled thereafter in this Honourable House for the consideration of every Member.

Madam Deputy Speaker, some have asked why the Government pursues a regional position while families face the cost of living at home. The answer is that the Government can do both. A responsible Government can invest in health care, in affordable housing, in education, in social protections, in infrastructure, in cost of living [relief], and in job creation through the Ministry of Finance and the annual budget. The regional engagement runs along that domestic delivery. It does not compete with it. Responsible Government carries both at once.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government thanks the community for engaging during this consultation meaningfully, and we will continue to receive feedback at togetherfor-caricom.gov.bm and invite members of the public to submit their feedback by May 31st.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I believe you have a second paper, Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I do.

The Deputy Speaker: You can have a drink of water first.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: You are too kind, Madam Deputy Speaker.

SPACE AND SATELLITE ADVISORY PANEL, RECONSTITUTION OF

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, I also rise today to update this Honourable House on the work being advanced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Department of Energy, to reconstitute Bermuda's Space and Satellite Advisory Panel.

This work represents another step forward in the Government's commitment to economic diversification, regulatory innovation, and long-term strategic planning for Bermuda's future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members of this House may recall that Bermuda previously undertook a strategic initiative to position itself within the global space and satellite industry through the development of the Bermuda National Space Strategy [2020-]2025, supported by an earlier Space and Satellite Advisory Panel. This work established a clear vision for Bermuda to leverage its strengths in regulation, insurance, and international partnerships to participate meaningfully in the growing global space economy.

The strategy identified key opportunity areas, including satellite communications, earth observation, and space insurance, and established strategic pillars focused on policy development, domestic capacity building, international engagement, and the utilisation of Bermuda's orbital resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, shortly after the development of the strategy, the global COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted its intended implementation. The previous Advisory Panel, which played a central role in shaping the strategy and guiding its earlier momentum, was unable to reconvene as planned. As a result, many of the initiatives envisioned under the 2020-2025 framework, including deeper industry engagement, regulatory advancement, and capacity building efforts, were not fully realised.

Now, in 2026, this Ministry is taking a deliberate step to reconstitute and to build on that earlier foundation. The reconstitution of the Space and Satellite Advisory Panel represents not a restart but a continuation of a modernisation of that original vision, one that

reflects both the lessons learned and the evolving realities of the global space economy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda has had a long history of contributing significantly to highly specialised international industries. Our jurisdiction has established a reputation for strong regulations, solid governance, financial services, insurance knowledge, and global connections. These are not abstract strengths. However, they are practical advantages that Bermuda can use to compete in new and developing industries with purpose, discipline, and credibility.

Opportunities in satellite communications, earth observation, space, finance, insurance, data services, research and development, and new technologies are all contributing to the rapid expansion of the global space economy. Bermuda must therefore be deliberate in determining where we can engage, where we can collaborate, and where we can provide lasting value for our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the global space economy is already valued at over \$600 billion and is projected to exceed \$1 trillion in the coming decades. That is not a distant or speculative market. It reflects a rapidly expanding commercial sector with tangible opportunities today.

For Bermuda, the opportunity is not theoretical, but the opportunity focuses on areas where we already have a competitive advantage, including insurance, financial services, and regulatory frameworks. Bermuda is well-positioned to capture a meaningful share of this growth and unlock new high-value economic activity for the Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that we have received and approved the proposed membership of the Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, enabling the Panel to be formally constituted and commence [its] important work. This goes beyond simply reestablishing the committee. And the target group will work on the development of the revised space strategy and ensure that the direction is guided by best practices, commercial realities, and Bermuda's domestic contacts. This will also support and connect to local workforce development and connect to our space policy.

The Panel will include:

- Doug Little, Chair of the UKspace and Professor in Practice at the University of Surrey;
- Colin Baldwin, Executive Director of the UKspace and former Head of the Local Growth Strategy at the UK Space Agency, who has experience in national strategy, cluster development, and startup support;
- Libby Jackson, [OBE FRAeS] Head of Space at the Science Museum and former European Space Agency Flight Director and Head of Space Exploration with the UK Space Agency;
- Mr. [Sanjeev] Gordhan, General Partner of One Ventures, who will contribute specialist

knowledge on venture capital investment frameworks and mobilisation of private capital;

- Keith Ryden, Director of Surrey Space Centre; and
- Dr. Joanna Hart, Director of Space Partnerships, who will provide expertise in investment, again, cluster development, and workforce initiatives.

The Bermuda representatives on the Panel include:

- Fiona Beck, Independent Director and former Bermuda Business Development Agency Director with experience in digital infrastructure, subsea cables, and international connectivity;
- Craig Swan, Chief Executive Officer of the Bermuda Monetary Authority, whose experience is in financial regulation, insurance supervision, and policy; and
- Mr. Philip J. Perinchief, Attorney-at-Law and former Attorney General of Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, collectively, this panel provides comprehensive coverage across key areas of Bermuda, and they are each willing to participate meaningfully in the global space economy. These include capital and economics, commercialisation and local industry alignment.

The Panel will operate under a structured framework, and this will include two plenary sessions supported by thematic working groups focused on priority areas such as earth stations, spectrums, small satellites, space insurance, and emerging technologies.

The Panel is supported by subcommittees that will organise its work, prepare materials, and coordinate meetings to ensure that the findings are captured clearly in Bermuda's updated National Space Strategy.

The updates and outputs in the report will ensure expert recommendations, a roadmap that sets out Bermuda's priorities, and will allow for us to move from the opportunity to implementation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, earth stations are one of the priority themes assigned to the panel's working groups, which is deliberate. The panel's expertise will inform the Government's review of the consultative responses, and the next steps will follow.

A key area, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the International Telecommunications Union orbital slots. These assets require careful policy considerations and strategic engagement if they are to be properly leveraged.

This work also supports Bermuda's ambition to become a leading jurisdiction for space finance. Bermuda already has a respected risk capital ecosystem, a sophisticated insurance and reinsurance market, and a financial services sector known for innovation and regulatory strength. These strengths will be applied to the space sector to attract new investment, create opportunities, and support new insurance [and] risk [solutions].

We are pleased to be part of the economic diversification, and through the reconstitution of the Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, we believe this to be a critical step in positioning Bermuda as a credible and competitive participant in the global space economy.

I look forward to updating this Honourable House as the work of the Panel progresses and we move towards the development of Bermuda's updated National Space Strategy.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the Minister [for] the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

Minister, you have the floor.

GROW LOCAL

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to highlight the launch of the [Grow Local initiative](#) by the Department of Planning, developed in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the agricultural industry has long played an important role in Bermuda's history, culture, and resilience. However, over many decades, agricultural activity has experienced a steady decline, which has made us increasingly reliant on imported food and more vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, extreme weather events, and international price volatility.

Madam Deputy Speaker, according to the information held in the planning system, Bermuda currently has approximately 737 acres of designated agricultural land. However, only half of this is currently being used for agricultural purposes, meaning that we have a substantial capacity to increase local crop production.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the preparation of developing plans, the Department of Planning receives multiple requests for the removal of protective agricultural designations in the interest of maximising the development potential of land. While it is recognised people will naturally seek to maximise the value of land within their ownership, one of the principal rationales offered in support of requests for the removal of agricultural reserve designations is the belief that there is no demand for agricultural land, due to the decline in the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this assertion is in contrast to the experience of officers within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources who receive multiple inquiries each month from people looking for land to farm. Such requests are not only from existing commercial farmers but from individuals looking to establish themselves in the sector, as well as those

looking for small plots for domestic-scale crop production.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Grow Local Initiative has been developed to address this disconnect. Central to the initiative is an online platform which seeks to connect willing landowners with protective farmers to maximise farming opportunities across the Island. Through the platform, landowners will be able to market land within their ownership which they are willing to make available for farming opportunities, prospective farmers will be able to view details of available sites, and the Department will be able to make landowners aware of any inquiries received and make the necessary connections.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important to highlight that the platform is a facilitation tool and any decisions regarding the use of that land within private ownership shall remain entirely at the discretion of the landowner. Any subsequent arrangements or agreements will be at the discretion of the participants.

The initiative will not be restricted to designated agricultural sites but any sites suitable for farming purposes would be included. Furthermore, I would like to make clear that any sites which enter into this initiative which do not have an agricultural reserve designation will not be designated as Agricultural Reserve through this process. The aim is not to rezone, only to explore the potential.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government has previously confirmed the preparation of an Integrated Agricultural Strategy for the Island, which states objectives for the emerging strategy, including:

- the need to make better use of technology to improve domestic food production;
- explore the means of making land more available for production; and
- encouraging greater participation in the agricultural structure.

The Grow Local Initiative directly supports these objectives and will play a complementary role in the advancement of that strategy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do believe that we need to think of more creative ways of boosting local food production, and while there has been some local traction in relation to alternative farming techniques, there is clearly still a place for traditional crop farming in Bermuda, and I hope the Grow Local platform will assist in increasing the supply of land available for farming.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude my Statement by encouraging members of the community to view the Grow Local initiative as an opportunity to participate in a collective national effort that can deliver meaningful long-term benefits for Bermuda.

Increasing local food production is directly connected to food security, public health, environmental sustainability and our long-term resilience as an Island community. Greater access to fresh and locally grown produce benefits all of us while also helping to reduce

our reliance on costly and often lower-quality imported food.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that Bermuda possesses both the land and the people necessary to help strengthen our domestic food supply, and I hope that the Grow Local initiative will help connect more members of our community with agriculture.

For further details of the Grow Local initiative, please visit the Department of Planning website at planning.gov.bm.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the Minister of Public Works.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT, STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT THROUGH

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise this morning to inform this Honourable House of the Government's intention to purchase the Compass Point Building located on 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke, as part of a broader effort to modernise government operations, reduce long-term rental costs, improve public service delivery and [strengthen the Government's long-term financial position](#).

At its core, this proposal is about a simple principle: the Government should spend taxpayer funds responsibly, operate efficiently and build long-term public value wherever possible.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Government office accommodation is currently spread across a combination of government-owned buildings and privately leased commercial space, primarily within the City of Hamilton. This fragmented arrangement creates inefficiencies, increases costs, limits coordination between departments, and makes it more difficult for the public to access services.

At the same time, the Government continues to spend substantial sums each year on commercial rent without creating a lasting public asset in return. In the 2026/27 financial year alone, projected spending on commercial rent is expected to approach \$11 million, excluding utilities and service charges. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a significant recurring expense.

Leasing will always have a role to play. However, continuing indefinitely with this level of dependence on private rental accommodation is neither financially sustainable nor operationally efficient. We are equally mindful that every dollar spent on rent is a dollar not directed towards roads, housing, public services or other national priorities.

It is also important that the Government plans are not only for today's pressures but for the future as well. For that reason, the Notice of Motion I will put before this Honourable House later today is not simply

about acquiring office space. It is part of a broader strategy to modernise the way the Government operates, improve working environments for public offices, and create infrastructure that supports more effective service delivery over the long term.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public should know that as part of our analysis, the Government looked into several options, including constructing a new government office complex. However, it was determined that a project of that scale would require a substantial upfront investment and several years of planning, approvals, procurement, and construction before becoming operational. During that time, the Government would still be required to maintain its existing lease accommodation and continue paying millions annually in rental costs while awaiting completion. For those reasons, constructing a new facility is not considered the most timely or cost-effective solution to the issue before us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the proposal being advanced is practical and immediate in its impact. The Compass Point Building provides over 81,000 square feet of structurally sound office space, supported by reliable infrastructure, backup power capacity, and the ability to create synergies by accommodating multiple interconnected government departments under one roof.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not simply about moving departments into a new building. When departments that work closely together are located in one place, coordination improves, services become more streamlined, delays can be reduced and members of the public are better able to access government services without navigating multiple locations.

This strategy also creates an important opportunity for the Government to address the condition of ageing public buildings. The purchase of the Compass Point [Building] will create the swing space necessary for the Government to temporarily relocate departments from older facilities, allowing comprehensive refurbishment works to begin on those ageing buildings.

In many cases, major renovations cannot be completed effectively while buildings remain occupied and operational. The additional swing space will create capacity for the Government to fully vacate certain ageing facilities, undertake major modernisation works more efficiently and return departments to improved working environments once renovations are complete.

Madam Deputy Speaker, public officers should be able to work in safe, modern and functional environments that support quality public service delivery and reflect the value we place on the people who serve this country every day. Improving the condition of government buildings is part of improving the quality of government itself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the negotiated purchase price for the Compass Point Building is \$14.5 million. Independent advice has been considered as part of this process, and the Government is satisfied

that the agreed price reflects fair market value. However, it is worth noting that the decision is not based on purchase price alone. The broader consideration is long-term financial sustainability. By consolidating departments into this facility, the Government expects to reduce private rental costs by at least \$2 million annually, in addition to operational efficiencies associated with the shared infrastructure, utilities and support services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I recognise that this represents a significant investment. But the alternative is to continue spending millions of taxpayer dollars year after year on rent while maintaining a system that we already know is fragmented and inefficient.

This proposal takes a different approach. It is about operating more efficiently, improving access to government services, and reducing long-term costs to taxpayers. Most importantly, it is about creating greater financial flexibility for the Government to invest in the priorities Bermudians care about most, such as infrastructure, public services, housing, and other community needs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, no single decision will resolve every challenge facing this country. However, responsible decisions made consistently over time place governments in a stronger position to meet those challenges effectively.

This proposal is intended to do exactly that. It is a practical step, a considered step, and I believe a responsible step in the best interest of the people of Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the Minister of Health. Minister, you have the floor.

MENTAL HEALTH ANTI-STIGMA MONTH, ENDING THE SILENCE—REFLECTIONS ON

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As [Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month](#) comes to a close, I rise today not only to reflect on the progress we have made throughout May, but to reaffirm this Government's sustained efforts to reduce stigma, expand access to care, and invest in the mental well-being of the people of Bermuda.

Mental health affects every family, every workplace, every school, and every community in this country. Yet, for far too long, stigma has prevented too many people from seeking the support they need. As the Minister of Health, I want to be clear: this Government is committed to building a Bermuda where asking for help is seen as a sign of strength, not weakness; where mental wellness is treated with the same urgency and compassion as physical health; and where no person feels isolated because of their mental health challenges.

Throughout this month, Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda demonstrated once again that when we speak openly about mental health, we create safer, healthier, and more connected communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this year's programme was one of the most active and collaborative to date. We began in Victoria Park, where partners from across the Island joined us to launch the month and highlight the importance of early intervention, education, and open dialogue. From that moment, the momentum continued and carried through every week, with meaningful conversations and community engagements taking place across the Island.

One of the most impactful events was the Youth Mental Health Debate, where young people explored the balance between privacy, autonomy, and parental involvement in accessing care. Their thoughtful and courageous contributions reflected the real-world challenges young people face today and reinforced the importance of creating systems that both protect their rights and support families. Their leadership continues to help shape our work on youth mental health reform, and I commend them for using their voices to challenge stigma and encourage understanding among their peers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to recognise the outstanding contribution of CedarBridge Academy, whose Vibe Tribe Mental Health Awareness Committee led a full week of student-designed activities focused on emotional well-being, peer support, creative expression, and honest conversations about mental health. What these students demonstrated is exactly what we need more of in Bermuda, young people leading with empathy, openness, and courage. Their efforts are helping to normalise conversations around mental health and create environments where students feel safe to speak up and seek support.

We also hosted a Youth Mental Health Town Hall at the Bermuda College, focusing on digital wellness and the impact of social media on mental health and relationships. Local experts shared valuable insights into how digital platforms influence emotional well-being and discussed practical strategies to support healthier online habits and healthier connections. These conversations were essential, particularly as we continue to navigate the growing mental health impact associated with cyberbullying, social media, and digital pressures affecting our young people.

We will conclude our Anti-Stigma Month celebration at our annual Move More Games on the 19th of June 2026, where this year and in the years ahead, the integration of physical and mental wellness will remain a key priority. As part of the celebration, we will recognise mental health advocates from across the community whose dedication continues to break down stigma and promote wellness for all. The Ministry is proud to honour and celebrate these individuals at the Move More Games.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while awareness is critically important, awareness alone is not enough. It must be matched by action and investment. That is why in the 2025 mid-year budget review, the Government committed \$2.29 million to strengthen Bermuda's comprehensive mental health support programme. This investment expanded access to counselling and therapeutic services to organisations, including the Family Centre, Age Concern, the Women's Resource Centre, MASC, and the Youth Mental Health Plan delivered through the Bermuda College Foundation.

This investment reflects our belief that there is no health without mental health. It also reflects our commitment to ensuring that every resident has access to timely, affordable, compassionate, and stigma-free care.

Madam Deputy Speaker, reducing stigma requires more than policy. It requires people coming together with compassion, honesty, and a willingness to support one another.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Bermuda Hospitals Board and the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute, the Family Centre, Solstice, the Department of Education, Bermuda College, and Bermuda Mental Health Foundation, Mindful Employer Bermuda, and Simply Bloom, and all of our partners whose leadership and collaboration made this month a success.

Madam Deputy Speaker, although Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month may be ending, our work certainly does not end here. This Government remains committed to expanding access to care, strengthening services, modernising mental health legislation, and continuing to invest in the organisations and professionals who support Bermudans every single day.

Together, let us continue building a Bermuda where stigma has no place, where mental wellness is embraced as a shared national priority, and where every person feels seen, supported, and empowered to seek help without fear or shame.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: And before we move on, I would like to acknowledge that sitting in our Gallery is a fellow MP from the UK jurisdiction, and his name is MP Calum Anderson. Let's give him a Bermuda welcome. Yes

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Deputy Speaker: There are several questions on the Order Paper that we will look at first, and then I have several persons wishing to ask Ministers questions.

So, let's start with the questions on the Order Paper.

Premier, you have questions before you, and I will ask Dr. DeCouto for the oral question to read his question.

QUESTION 1: SUGAR TAX REVENUE TO DATE (BY FINANCIAL YEAR) SINCE 2017

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and good morning to you.

Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please provide for this Honourable House the total Government revenue from the sugar tax (customs duty on sugar), to date, broken out by financial year since 2017?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The figures provided by the Customs . . . sorry, let me start by saying the figures that the Honourable Member requested up to fiscal year 2019/20 are already in the public domain and will not be answered.

The amounts for the sugar tax, of course, it is important to note the difference between the baseline tax on sugar and the increase which was done, and those are the figures that I will provide.

- Fiscal year 2020/21, \$6,226,412.
- Following fiscal year, \$6,590,721.
- The next fiscal year, \$6,283,629.
- The following fiscal year, \$7,402,494.
- The following fiscal year, \$7,380,561.
- And fiscal year 2025/2026, \$7,996,075.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any supplementaries for that question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you.

Will the Honourable Premier advise if any of these funds have been earmarked for specific health-related initiatives?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government of Bermuda has spent a significant amount of money on health-related initiatives, including the expansion of universal health care, and all of those come from the revenue sources that have been created by this Government.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Second supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. Are there policies or procedures to ensure that these sugar taxes are only passed on to the consumers who actually buy products containing the sugar?
Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: We have revised the sugar tax to make sure that it applies to products that are of high sugar content, and those particular matters, as the Honourable Member knows, were done, I think a few years ago, when he was in the Senate.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Shall we move to the second question? Oh, sorry. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary.
Considering the answers that the Premier . . . and good morning, Deputy Speaker, and to the public, and to all of us.

The Deputy Speaker: And good morning to you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering the numbers that are stated, besides one or two, there is an incremental increase. Is that an indication that it is not working? Since retail, in many cases, has been down, that the actual tax is going up that we are receiving on the sugar tax, is that an indicator? Has it been looked at as an indicator that maybe it is not as effective as we thought?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member's assumptions are incorrect. It should be noted that customs duty is ad valorem, which means charging the value. And as the Honourable Member would know, there have been significant increases in the prices of these things in the global markets due to international trends.

However, volume figures can be provided if the Honourable Member does . . . as has been stated in the House, there has been a volume change on a number

of these particular matters, and those things have been reported.

But I think it is important to note, and I think we hear this, we want to talk about health insurance, we want to talk about other things. The reality is—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —that sugar, and high concentrations of sugar, and these types of things materially impact the cost of health insurance, [and] materially impact the amounts of non-communicable diseases in the country. The Government has put forward this policy, and the Opposition should determine whether or not they want people with more diabetes in the country, or whether or not . . . or whether or not . . . That can be their position, Madam Deputy Speaker, but we have set out where our position is.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Are there any further supplementary questions?
There being none, question two.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, you are living in a cloud, bye.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT DIGITAL ASSET INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

With regard to the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance's recent public statement that "Cabinet has approved a framework to allow the Government of Bermuda to accept and invest in digital assets within a clear regulatory structure," will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please inform this Honourable House on the details of that framework?

Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I want him to repeat that answer—

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 17(9)(a)(viii), I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement I gave earlier today.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House because the Statement did not, in fact, answer the question of the framework. It was very general and did not advise what the framework approved by Cabinet was.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

An Hon. Member: Slippery, man.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have any further answer?

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 17(9)(a)(viii), I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement I gave earlier today.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's two non-answers.

The Deputy Speaker: Question three is [for a] written [response]. Did you receive the written response?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 18 of the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly, as was written to you, I did write for permission to defer question three to the next day of meeting, and you did confirm that that was done.

The Deputy Speaker: I wrote it wrong, deferment by the wrong thing. Thank you. Yes, he did. Thank you.

That moves us to the questions for Junior Minister Lister. For the first question, they were all [for] written [responses]. Did you receive the responses?

Thank you.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I just received them.

QUESTIONS: PORT ROYAL PRIMARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY MATTER

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please state for this Honourable House the specific statutory provision(s) of the Education Act or any regulations relied upon to justify her intervention in a disciplinary matter at Port Royal Primary School?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether her intervention was issued as a formal directive, and if so, whether that directive was made in writing or recorded in any official Ministry file?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House the established appeal process for student disciplinary matters was followed in this case, and if not, the basis on which it was set aside?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

For the second set of questions for the same Junior Minister, they have been deferred due to the absence of the Minister, the PS, and relevant technical officers. So, they have been deferred to be answered to you. There were no answers. They could not get any answers. And they have been off Island for a considerable amount of time. Okay.

That moves us to the written questions for Minister Hayward. They are all written questions, but I want to inform the House that for question number one, that was disallowed.

So, did you receive written responses for question two and three?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael Fahy: I have received an answer. Thank you.

QUESTION: CARICOM, WORK PERMITS HELD BY MEMBER NATIONALS

[Disallowed—Standing Order 17(5)(g)(xiii)]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the number of nationals from CARICOM member states who currently hold valid work permits in Bermuda broken down by (i) nationality; (ii) work permit length; (i.e., one, two, three, four, five year or temporary work permits) (iii) job category for which the permit relates; and (iv) the overall percentage of work permits currently valid in Bermuda that are held by nationals from CARICOM member states?

QUESTION: CARICOM, MINISTERIAL MEETINGS ON IMMIGRATION

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the number of meetings whether in person or by electronic means that he has had with Ministers from CARICOM member states for substantive discussions on immigration matters over the last 36 months, broken down by date, place and identity of the relevant Minister/CARICOM member states?

QUESTION: CARICOM, NUMBER OF BERMUDIANS EMIGRATING TO CARICOM MEMBER STATES—36 MONTH BREAKDOWN

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the

number of Bermudian nationals who have emigrated to CARICOM member states in the last 36 months, broken down by numbers and the CARICOM member state to which the Bermudian emigrated?

Hon. Michael Fahy: But was unaware that question one was disallowed until now.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Well, I did ask that you be notified, sir.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Yesterday. Yes.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Can we receive further information as to why those questions have been denied?

The Deputy Speaker: According to Standing Order 17, and I cannot remember which one it is right off my head. A very cogent and I think valid response was given regarding that because of the type of information, and I can allow the . . . okay, thank you.

So, it would look at 17,500 different documents, and the Ministry currently does not capture the information in a way that would allow for them to readily be able to give you responses. And in fact, I would say that the Ministry made it clear that it would take them months to even try and collate the information, and by the end of that, you still may not have an accurate report because things probably will have changed.

So, Standing Order 17(5)(g)(xiii). So, you can have a look at that. I disallowed the question.

Thank you.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you for the clarification, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Okay.

So that takes us to the questions for Minister Adams, and they are oral questions, so I ask Mr. King to write *[sic]* his questions . . . read his questions.

QUESTION 1: GREENLAND FARM, ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCES

Mr. Robert King: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, Members of this Honourable House, and the listening public.

The question that I have for the Honourable Minister [is], Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what enforcement measures to date have been executed against the Greenland Farm for the chronic issues related to the farm's operations, including sewage runoff onto and to neighbouring properties and homes, and noxious odours emanating from

the farm, which negatively impact the surrounding community?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning again, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources [DENR] has taken several steps to address concerns related to the operations of the named farm that sit within its remit.

DENR issued a warning letter last year under the Water Resources Act 1975 regarding their disposal of manure. DENR has been working with the farm operators and the Ministry's Waste Management section to ensure transfer of manure to the Marsh Folly Composting Facility occurs more frequently, as reducing the volume in the manure pit is expected to help lessen odour concerns.

It should be noted that complaints regarding odour at the site are not currently monitored by the Ministry of Public Works and Environment. The farm owners have also completed works along the northern boundary of the property, including berms and drainage trenches, which thus far appear to have helped reduce storm water runoff during recent periods of heavy rainfall. The farm owners are continuing to assess longer-term drainage solutions for the area.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Any supplementaries to this question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister explain to this Honourable House why, despite long-standing complaints, documented environmental concerns, sewage runoff, and persistent odour issues, the Government has apparently failed to fully enforce its own environmental regulations, public health standards, and lease conditions against this tenant? The tenant has a lease on government land. And there is clear evidence that it has been in violation of that lease, but to date, to my knowledge and to the knowledge of the constituents, no meaningful action to hold them to account has taken place.

Thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I just named off a number of actions that the Government is working in collaboration with the owners of the farm to address the said matters.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further supplementary questions?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Would the Honourable Minister accept that the warning letters and the measures taken to date by [the] Government have not meaningfully and appropriately addressed the problem with the operators of the farm as the problems continue?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Robert King: And have continued for more than seven years.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer to my comments earlier, and I will go back to this. DENR has been working with the farm owners . . . sorry, the farm owners have also completed works along the northern boundary of the property, including berms and drainage trenches, which thus far appears to have helped reduce storm water runoff during recent periods of heavy rainfall.

So, work has been done, and we are beginning to see progress of said works.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Question two?

QUESTION 2: GREENLAND FARM, ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCES

Mr. Robert King: Thank you. Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what public funds and resources, if any, are being utilised to remedy the chronic environmental problems caused by the privately operated dairy farm?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Once again, I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will say that no public funds or resources have been used to address this matter. It remains a private matter, and it is the responsibility of the farm owners to ensure compliance with all applicable environmental regulations as required by their leasing agreement.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

If that be the case, Honourable Minister, why was there a proposal sent out to the public for manure remediation efforts? A proposal was sent out by [the]

Government to the public for a private provider to provide services to address that problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I stand by my first comment. No public funds have been used to address any of these matters that he is referring to . . . the Honourable Member is referring to, sorry.

Every progress that we have done thus far has been taken on by the responsibility of the farm owners.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Can the Minister then explain why the proposal was sent out for a private provider to provide remediation works?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: The RFP that the Honourable Member is referring to was simply to assist the farm owners by finding an appropriate provider to do their services.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

That was your second supplementary. Yes. Thank you.

That moves us now on to the Ministerial Statements for today.

First up is a question for the Premier by the Member Doug, I am sorry, by the Member from constituency 25.

QUESTION 1: DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And since the Premier purports that his Statement would have answered my submitted questions, I am sure many of the follow-on topics I had in mind to discuss will definitely be applicable here. So, I look forward to his answers.

With respect to the statement that digital assets might be invested in by some of the public funds, which funds does the Premier, and the Government, anticipate investing in these digital assets, and what sort of amounts and types of these assets does he anticipate?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. [Answer?]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, the funds that the Government allows are managed under the Public Funds Act. When amendments are brought under the Public Funds Act, we will have plenty of time

to debate said funds, but it should be noted that those are managed under the Public Funds Investment Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker, is it the case that the Premier does not have any idea how he intends to invest digital assets and that the Public Funds Investment Committee has not yet been consulted on this topic, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, first of all, that is not a question, as you would well know, and the Honourable Member should make sure that he has his—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: What is your point of order?

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I went to elementary school, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know what a question is.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: But what is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Has the Premier . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —not consulted the Public Funds Investment Committee about this topic yet?

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And the point of order is: is he misleading the House? Because I asked a question.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: You were going to —

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I sincerely hope as we get started in this wonderful session

today, especially as we have visitors from overseas, that the Honourable Members will conduct themselves in accordance with Standing Orders.

Because here is the reality, Madam Deputy Speaker. He has the ability to ask the questions, and I have the ability to answer the questions. I may not like his questions, but I must answer. He may not like my answers, but I must give them. So here we go —

[Laughter and general uproar]

Hon. E. David Burt: He may not like them, but I am going to give the answers. I will wait for him to calm down so he can hear.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, Members, let me hear the answer to his first —

Hon. E. David Burt: So again, Madam Deputy Speaker,

The Deputy Speaker: —supplementary question.

Hon. E. David Burt:—that was not a question that was trying to say, *Is X, Y, and Z happening?* But let me explain to the Honourable Member. It is very simple and clear.

The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Public Funds Act. As my Statement clearly said, if the Honourable Member went to elementary school—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —so surely, he has the ability to read what the Statement says. It says that there are digital representations of the same assets which are done, and it would be arguable that those things cannot be invested in.

However, the reality is that these funds are managed under the Public Funds Act. So, if the Public Funds Act right now, they have X, Y, and Z in treasuries, and they want to have Treasury bills and all the other things, and they can do that in digital form, which may be more efficient.

The Honourable Member is apparently trying to fish for something. If he wants to ask a specific question, he should probably ask so.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

An Hon. Member: What is the point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is imputing improper motive. Nobody is fishing. I am here exercising my duties, and he still has not answered the question. Thank you.

An Hon. Member: As usual.

Another Hon. Member: As usual.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Member, did you have a second supplementary? I cannot—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Has the Public Funds Investment Committee, which I am sure the Premier has seen the various Minutes and so forth, made any recommendations regarding these sorts of digital assets, that he is aware of?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: The answer is no. This is not a—the Public Funds Investment Committee may recommend. He is missing the point.

We are amending the legislation to enable there to be investments in digital assets. If we are going to receive digital assets, then we need to have the propensity or the ability to invest them. Right now, when we get cash . . . just to help the Shadow Minister, when we get cash into the Government, and we have balances, we put them into Treasury bills and other money market securities and other types of things.

And in the future, if we receive stablecoins, we could then put those into the digital representation of the exact same items. This is not a question of consultation with the Public Funds [Investment] Committee. This is a question of upgrading the legislation.

I mean, the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act still has specifications on the types of printing or the types of printers that need to print checks for different things. We are modernising legislation. I am not entirely certain what the Honourable Member is trying to get at.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a second question, Member?

QUESTION 2: DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Statement referred to around \$62,000 worth of various digital assets that were distributed to various people at these events. Where did the source of the funding for that \$62,000 come from, i.e., who paid for the digital assets?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: A great question, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It came from the sponsors of the conference, whether it is Circle, Coinbase, Stellar, or Kraken/Payward. They have partners that are coming in, just like last year, where they came in to go ahead and say, *We want to assist the country, we want to show, we want to demonstrate how digital payments adoption works.* Just as last year, it was it. So, to answer the Honourable Member's question, [it is] the companies that did, and not a dime of public money.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? Supplementary or third question?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Is this . . . this is a supplementary or third [question]?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I will just speak up, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: By my sophisticated calculations, this is around \$42,000 of unspent digital assets. Are the people who attended these events able to use those in any way?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: The persons have it in their wallets. So, some people from last year saved it. They get money. Others, because the same 30 vendors who were trained, are accepting digital currencies, so they can go to stores and spend them.

So, that is it. The BEDC has them. The BEDC knows the list of people, so they have them. So, for instance, if you receive Kraken xStocks and a gold ETF, you may wish to save that, as if you receive USDC, which automatically compounds interest on a regular and ongoing basis continually. You may wish to save that, or you may wish to spend it.

We have more vendors that are accepting digital currency. We are moving into the space where we are going to get supermarkets work with the Ministry of Home Affairs and other vendors. This is what it is, enabling us to do different things, such as when we are

dealing with financial assistance programmes, et cetera, being able to spread them wider than the two major supermarket chains and others. So, there are a number of things.

But the reality is that persons can retain those monies, they can spend those monies, they can spend them online, they can spend them overseas, they can get virtual credit cards, they can spend it, they can do numerous different things. And I am uncertain if the Honourable Member did attend. I know Members from his party did, but it would be nice if the Honourable Shadow Minister of Finance would have come so he could have learned all these things and did not have to hear them from me at the desk.

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order! Point of order!

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House. I know he had his Ray-Bans on, on the day, and was recording the audience. He would have seen me in the audience.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter and clapping]

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: *What's in your wallet?*

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. So, do you have a second supplementary . . . or a third question?

QUESTION 3: DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I have a third question, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Statement referred to changes in the FinTech Development Fund to make it become more effective. Could the Premier advise what were the issues with this Development Fund? Why has it not been effective for its purposes since it was originally passed?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is not necessarily a question of whether or not it has been effective. The reality is this has been a long journey, Madam Deputy Speaker. And

the history of Bermuda's FinTech journey has been well advertised.

We started, we adjusted strategies, et cetera. We set up things that are in place. Now there are companies such as the ones that are giving these funds for airdrops who want to make sure to share and to promote. We saw the announcement in Davos where between Coinbase and Circle putting up funds, the Stellar Development Foundation has committed funds, but these things are going to be in the form of digital assets. They are not going to be in the form of, you know, fiat currency, and so we have to amend the Act, so we have these types of things.

So, it is not a question of why the Fund did not work. We are modernising it for the time. Before the Fund was just used for to receive funds and for education, other purposes like that. Those donations do not materialise. But now we have commitments on new levels on the things which we are working on with the on-chain economy initiative, et cetera, and so, we need to modify the legislation.

And the other thing, which I think is important, which I hope the Honourable Member will take into account, is that not only are we modifying the legislation to receive digital funds, et cetera, but we are also making sure that we can use these disbursements to help Bermudian companies. The BMA is going to be putting out new legislation regarding payment service providers. In my Statement, I had mentioned that some Bermudians in the past who have tried to go into these businesses have had a challenge. And it is also important for us to be able to support these companies getting set up. Because if we look at digital finance over time, we are eight years in from the legislation being established.

We know in the insurance industry, many of the entrepreneurs are not Bermudian. We want to make sure that people who are working in this industry, who are doing this, who are at the Bermuda College, who are at the Berkeley Institute, have the ability to become entrepreneurs, build their own apps and do things, and provide the avenues to support them. And that is why it's important for the FinTech Development Fund to be modernised.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Any supplementaries? No supplementaries?

Okay, that takes us on to the next Minister. I call on the Member from constituency 7 to put her question to the Minister for Housing.

QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My question from the Statement is really around the \$1,400 rental fee that will be charged for the

tenants that will be going into the property at Mid-dletown.

The Deputy Speaker: Ask your question.

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to know if the rent will be reviewed on an annual basis, or will it remain fixed for a specific period of time?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is always up for review, possibly. But I am sure the Honourable Member will know. I am sure the Honourable Members in this House will know that the Bermuda Housing Corporation's mandate is to provide affordable homes for rent for our people, and that will continue.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Supplementary, please, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to know what the Housing Corporation's standard review period for their rental property says, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Same answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Madam Deputy Speaker, that is not an answer to the question.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: I—, Minister, did you want to elaborate? Just—

An Hon. Member: Rephrase the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Okay.

You are still on your first supplement. Go ahead.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You can rephrase the question for him.

Ms. Robin Tucker: The question was, what is the Bermuda Housing Corporation's review period for looking at their rent and their potential rent increases?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: As I said, every year.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you. Second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: This is a second supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, yes, sorry. Go ahead.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you. I would like to know if the tenants in that property can expect any other additional built-in costs other than the rent.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, they won't.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Okay, great. Thank you.
A second question, please?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: A second question is, what will they . . . sorry, is there any . . . is it anticipated that other two-bedroom rental accommodations will have the same monthly rent?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: As I said earlier, the Bermuda Housing Corporation has a standard rate that they use for one-, two-, three-, and four-[bedroom units], and that will continue to remain the same throughout the year.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Yes. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: Supplemental, please. Yes, thank you.

I would like to know, then, if the Minister will give an undertaking to make those rental fee amounts

... I do not know if they are public. I have not seen them. But if they are not, if the Minister will give an undertaking to make them public.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Those rates have been stated in this House many times. They are on public record, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, please.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, okay. So, I also would like to know what is the maintenance schedule anticipated for these properties that the Government is establishing?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Same as they are for the other 700 homes that we have.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That is exactly why I asked the question, because we could see that the maintenance schedules have not always been kept up to date.

QUESTION 3: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, if the Minister would not mind telling us what that actual maintenance schedule is, that would be wonderful. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that your third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: That is my third question. Yes, thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it is the same answer, Madam Deputy Speaker. The ... all the units are looked at on a regular basis.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, yes, a supplementary.
Can the Minister please state what the schedule is, please, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It is the same schedule it was when they were in Government for five years.

It is on a regular basis. Of course, as you will know, I mean, I would think this is 101 stuff. But anyway, I will say it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as any household in any country, you can have a regular maintenance schedule, but there will be things that happen at anyone's household at any given time that may cause you to move your schedule from one day to the next.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, the public knows the answer to the question.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Now I call on the Member from constituency 20. He has questions for the same Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

So, the Minister's statements were quite interesting. Where he said it is absolute nonsense being spun in the media.

Hon. E. David Burt: Nonsense.

Hon. Michael Fahy: And he also said that contrarians write newspaper columns and try to cast doubt on the Government. So, I do have a couple of questions based on that for the Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, so you are accepting the criticism?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: Question one: Is it the Minister's position, therefore, that building higher in Hamilton or giving a tourism incentive style Act of concessions to encourage private investors to develop property in Hamilton is absolute nonsense or contrarian? That is my first question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I do not know where the Honourable Member's been, but we have done that already.

An Hon. Member: So, it is not contrarian—

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, the Minister accepts that it is not contrarian. I mean, this is the point.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: And in fact, that is not accurate to say that there is a tourism and style investment Act in the City of Hamilton to encourage building higher. That is not accurate, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, I have a second question. Okay?

The Deputy Speaker: You are going straight to a second question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Straight to a second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: Given the statements, again about media people writing contrarian statements, and whatnot—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: —is it the Minister's position that it is absolute nonsense to suggest giving long-term leases to private developers on government land to incentivise building different forms of housing?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, to ask that question, *Is it complete nonsense?* Absolutely not.

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Absolute nonsense* was the phrase.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Absolutely not.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Supplementary?

[[Inaudible interjections and laughter]]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Madam Deputy Speaker, then that means the Statement is inaccurate.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Okay? It is inaccurate. And this is a thing that is being put out to the public to suggest—

The Deputy Speaker: Do you want to put that in a question form?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Being contrarian. That is my point, that we have ideas. We have made many suggestions, and [the] Government has accepted.

My third question.

The Deputy Speaker: So, you are going straight to your third question?

QUESTION 3: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: My third question. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let's go Michael Fahy. Let's go Honourable Member.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Is it the Minister's position that it is absolute nonsense to suggest repurposing empty school buildings for temporary and emergency housing?

An Hon. Member: Hmm.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I would like to know what empty school buildings he refers to.

Hon. Michael Fahy: That is not an answer. It is a question to a question.

Again, is it absolute nonsense to make those types of suggestions to encourage that individuals that need emergency or temporary housing, other buildings that are in [the] government stock, such as schools, can be repurposed? I do not believe the people of Bermuda think it's nonsense and I do not believe that is contrarian.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I do believe that is nonsense.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you for confirming that good suggestions to house people are absolute nonsense. I think the people of Bermuda heard that loud and clear.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, they are not good suggestions. That is the problem.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Third Minister, Minister Haywood.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. Talk to the Chair.
Hello!

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: The Member from constituency 20. Do you have a question for the Minister of Economy and Labour?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Put your question.

QUESTION 1: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you. This is for the Minister.
This is in relation to the report from the Registry General. Does the Minister believe it is concerning and that it is difficult to sustain a Bermudian population, given that there were 452 births recorded in 2025, while 558 persons passed away?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government has been extremely clear about the demographic trends in Bermuda, and the Government has been deliberate as it pertains to the measures we have put in place to ensure that we have a sustainable economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary, Member?

Hon. Michael Fahy: No.
Second question, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Second question.

QUESTION 2: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Does the Minister believe that it is concerning that almost 25 per cent of live births in 2025 were from two non-Bermudian parents?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I believe you would have to look at the historic trend. The question does not frame it in a matter as to whether that is normal or not. And if it is normal, then it would not be concerning.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, again, the question is a pretty serious one. And this is a third question.

The Deputy Speaker: Third question.

QUESTION 3: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Does the Minister think it is now time to introduce some form of incentives to encourage more Bermudian births, given the numbers that we have?

An Hon. Member: *Should the Minister—*

Hon. Michael Fahy: Should the Minister be putting in place incentives to ensure, or to encourage, Bermudians to have more children to get the numbers up?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: The work that the Government does is to build an environment where Bermudians can thrive. Part of that is ensuring that Bermuda remains affordable. We have had a Minister appointed responsible for the cost of living. The Government has worked hard to reduce taxes. The Government has also provided additional social interventions, such as early childhood fees, supports for families, all to encourage more children being born in Bermuda.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: Would the Minister therefore accept that those plans that he has talked about [and] that are in place are not working given the downward trend of Bermudian births?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Second supplementary?

Hon. Michael Fahy: No, again, the public's heard, I think, what is required.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
That takes us on to questions for Minister Furbert from the Member for constituency 7.
Member, put your question to the Minister.

**QUESTION 1: HEARING SUPPORT
PILOT PROGRAMME**

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My question is, When will the pilot officially roll out and what is the current state of readiness?

The Deputy Speaker: For the pilot hearing programme?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, please. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you for that question.

I did mention in the Statement that the pilot [programme] rolled out [on] the 1st of May.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Supplementary or second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, please, a supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Minister. I did miss that.
My supplementary is, Can the Minister tell us which area within her Ministry is actually primarily responsible for overseeing the pilot?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member, for that question.

I also mentioned in the [Statement] that the area that was responsible for this programme is Ageing and Disability Services.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Okay

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you very much. Obviously, if that is what was said, I missed that too.

But I was listening and I did go to elementary school.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, my second question is—

The Deputy Speaker: Second question?

**QUESTION 2: HEARING SUPPORT
PILOT PROGRAMME**

Ms. Robin Tucker: Can the Minister tell us where the public can access a list of service providers that are actually delivering the services that are part of the pilot?

So, I do remember that she said that applications will go to Ageing and Disability and applications for a different group will go to Age Concern, but there was not a whole lot talked about the actual providers.

So, if she could tell us how that actually works, or if there are specific service providers identified and how the public can access them.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I did mention also in the [Statement] that anyone that is interested can contact Ageing and Disability Services, as well as Age Concern. And they should be able to get the names of the providers by contacting those two agencies.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second, I mean, a supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: I do not. My third question, Madam Deputy Speaker,—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

**QUESTION 3: HEARING SUPPORT
PILOT PROGRAMME**

Ms. Robin Tucker: —is there was a lot that was mentioned, obviously, to do with seniors. But I did not hear anything about children.

So, I would like to know, are parents that are not on Financial Assistance, because I do . . . there was some mention in the Statement, but can the Minister sort of give some clarity around how parents with children that have hearing issues that are . . . whose parents may have private insurance, not on Financial Assistance or anything like that. But how is it open to parents generally that are not on Financial Assistance?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member, for the question.

There is a charity, which I believe one of your Members is involved in, and that would be the Committee of 25. That is a charity for children that have medical concerns, conditions. And they have been very helpful to parents with . . . if their child has had a medical condition that requires the use of hearing devices.

But again, I want the listening public to understand that hearing assessments, hearing aids are provided through private insurance if it is major medical. If there is a parent out there who has questions, I also

mentioned in my Statement that they can reach out to Ageing and Disability Services as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Are there any supplementaries for that?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I call on the next Member, I just want to point out to the House that we have five minutes before lunch, yet we have 16 minutes [remaining in the Question Period], and I am going to ask you whether or not we want to burn out these 16 minutes or stop at 12:30.

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you. All right.
Okay. I call on the Member from constituency 10.
Minister, this Member has questions for you as well.

QUESTION 1: HEARING SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAMME

Mr. Robert King: I thank the Honourable Minister for the shout-out to the Committee of 25, of which I am a member. And we do work closely together in that regard.

Regarding the new pilot programme, can the Honourable Minister speak to what the budget allocation is and the number of staff that are going to be required to ensure that this new initiative operates efficiently to serve the needs of the community?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for the question.

The amount that we are starting with is approximately \$50,000 per year. And we are estimating that that will potentially help approximately 20 persons per year. We have done a bit of research as it relates to how much hearing aids and assessments do cost. Well, we have done the research, and these devices will also be available for persons in our community every five years.

Are there any other questions?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Do you have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Regarding the programme, what is the anticipated number of clients for the current year and the trend towards increased service need?

Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member for the question.

I also just wanted to mention that I think the . . . Age Concern is the one that is following through with the administrative side of this programme. So, there is not any additional staff needed to perform or participate in this pilot programme.

What is great about this pilot programme is that we do have the opportunity to gather statistics and data, and it is part of the relationship that we will have with Age Concern that they will have to report yearly on how our community, our people are using this programme so that we can make better predictions about the finances that will surround the support for this programme.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

And on that note, I am going to stop us so the Premier can carry us for lunch unless you have a question that can be answered in less than a minute.

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I ask that the Premier move us for lunch, please.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn for lunch until 2:00 p.m.

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

[Laughter]

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: So moved.

Proceedings suspended at 12:29 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:01 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon. We shall resume with today's proceedings.

[Gavel]

QUESTION PERIOD

[Continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: We are on Question Period. There are thirteen and a half minutes remaining and the last matter that we dealt with was with Minister Furbert, and I think Member King, constituency 10, was putting questions.

Member King, are you continuing?

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: Member King has said that he has finished with his questioning.

There were questions for disability and inclusion. Are Member Tucker and Member Pearman still wishing to ask those questions?

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'll defer, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will defer as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you very much.

That brings us to . . . No, there were none for the Ministry of National Security. That brings us to the [Statement] that was done regarding CARICOM.

Minister Lightbourne, I had one Member listed who wished to ask a question on that, that was Member Robinson.

Member, are you still wishing to ask your questions?

Okay, Minister Lightbourne, the questions are being put to you.

QUESTION 1: CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you and good afternoon to my colleagues and to you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

Can the Minister specify whether the 2024 Omnibus Survey's 53 per cent support for CARICOM was for CARICOM as an entity or for Bermuda to become a full member of CARICOM?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I believe I have . . . oh, I do. Look at that. I have it here. This was support for Bermuda's full membership application. And so, this was the Omnibus Survey of December 2024, Q4. So, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Do you have a supplement?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

Given that there is a 53 per cent registered support, can we get a bit of breakdown on the pool that was utilised in this Omnibus Survey?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am happy to go back to confirm the further data points, but as would ordinarily be commissioned, the Omnibus Survey is conducted and does its own analysis in association for any of the data and invites an array of stakeholders in the community to provide questions should they wish to participate, of which we did in Q4 of 2024.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Do you have a supplement, a further supplemental? Sorry.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, [Madam] Deputy Speaker, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Given that we have moved away from the potential of a referendum, can the Minister confirm whether or not this Government, due to this support, will consider having a referendum anyway?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would definitely invite the quantifiable information that says that there is support for a referendum. I would say definitely there are members of the public who have engaged.

There are some that have asked for a referendum, but the Government has not, to date, seen the same be true for any of the other associations and organisations that the Government has been associated with and doesn't believe to be an appropriate use of taxpayer funds.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Second question?

QUESTION 2: CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, a second question.

The Minister did speak in the Statement about a referendum being unnecessary, and I understand

that we just got a previous answer, but I would like to get an outline as to why the Government has arrived to that decision that a referendum is unnecessary for full membership of CARICOM.

The Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The intention of the Ministry is to collate all of the feedback that we received during the consultative phase to include the array of invitations from the public and/or questions. In the White Paper, we will return to both here in the House and to the public with our summary of all of the CARICOM consultation to date and the various questions that may have been asked.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Is there a supplemental?

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Member from constituency 20.
Member, you have the floor. A supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

Given the Minister's statement that she does not believe that a referendum would represent good value for money for the Bermudian taxpayer, is it the Minister's view that a fee of over \$2 million that would be likely payable to CARICOM for full membership does represent good value for money to the Bermudian taxpayer?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Member . . . Minister. Sorry.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the Honourable Member from constituency 20 for his question.

It is important to first anchor the response in the fact that the fee that Bermuda would be invited to pay has not yet been negotiated, and so what was included in the Green Paper was the maximum that it could be should we have signed up to every single Treaty of Chaguaramas as currently listed. We have already outlined, as coupled with the figure, time and time again, that that is not as an indicative cost, but not the cost that we anticipate because we already know, based on our letter of entrustment, that we cannot fully participate in all of the framework as an Overseas Territory, and so when invited to ask the value of being able to unlock opportunities for Bermudians that have ordinarily just been unlocked for the few, when being invited to unlock opportunities for the Government to pursue trade and diversification of routes for Bermuda,

when considering the diversification and expansion of education opportunities, again, that Bermuda has ordinarily not been able to participate in, the answer of if the Government would invest time and resource into that, I do believe it to be of value and good money for the resources and the opportunity that ordinarily has not been provided to Bermudians.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: Before I seek whether or not others wish to ask a supplemental, I would like to recognise that in the Gallery we have former Member, long-time Member, and former Leader of the OBA, Cole Simons. Welcome.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Okay.

[Question Period, continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have any further supplementals, Member from [constituency] 20?
Any further supplementals?
Yes.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Given that the Progressive Labour Party was unable to secure the popular vote, or 50 per cent support in the last general election, can the Minister confirm whether or not she feels that without that proper mandate, would a referendum therefore give the Government a true mandate to pursue full membership of CARICOM? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I appreciate the Honourable Member's creativity in the presentation of the question. We remain the Government. We have a mandate from the people. And based on that convincing mandate of

the number of seats that we have here in the House of Assembly, we will both anchor our actions—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —in our policies as instructed and informed by the members who have elected us. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Thank you.
Do I have a further supplemental?
I recognise the Member from constituency 2.
Member.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Would the Minister be so kind and share if indeed she feels Bermuda and Bermudians have paid a price for not being aligned with the Caribbean for centuries, akin to our alignment with the UK?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Member for the question, and I think that what is true about this process and through the consultation is that we have heard about the historical ties and the historical lack of acknowledgement that for years and for generations has been ignored relating to our Caribbean brothers and sisters, namely The Bahamas, namely Turks and Caicos and other islands that Bermudian names can be found [in] even to this day.

I think when we talk about economic opportunities and opportunities to take advantage of discussions and opportunities that are being discussed around the CARICOM table often, Bermuda is at the crossroads, and also stands at a place where it has evolved to be able to speak to both its successes and also take part in the successes of other Caribbean countries that are just like us and have similar challenges and similar opportunities to develop.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Are there any further supplementals?
I recognise the Member from constituency 7.
Member, you have the floor.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I just want to know if the Minister can just clarify why the decision was taken not to invite the public to weigh in, whether they actually wanted a referendum, why that wasn't done during the consultation process.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Ministry notes the history of associations that Bermuda has been a part of for years—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —and a referendum is not part of its history. And so, we find it to be curious that only when invited to deepen ties with our clear history and clear trade and opportunities that ordinarily has been dissuaded from the population to both acknowledge and also participate in that the call for a referendum has been countered with it. Before the Government began its CARICOM journey, a 2024 Omnibus Survey was commissioned. Before the Ministry, under my stewardship, commissioned its journey, we did another Omnibus Survey at the Q4 of 2025.

And again, Bermudians, without knowing, seeing, and hearing, they were willing to participate and saw benefits and were able to quantify those to the Ministry. And so I feel it is clearly an attempt and a consistent attempt to create what is the distraction of the opportunity that the Bermudian public saw fit to weigh into and saw it beneficial for them and us as their agents and acting on their behalf to both problem-solve for the country and problem-solve for their challenges.

We see it fit to proceed to this exploration and to deepen in ties to an organisation that we've already been a part of for years, and since 2003, in particular.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Member, are there any other supplementals?

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: There being none, Member, do you have a third question?

QUESTION 3: CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

And my third question is, if businesses are already expanding into the Caribbean market as an associate with associate membership, can the Minister outline what further barriers will be broken down for businesses with full membership of CARICOM?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This is a question that's already in the public domain as part of the Green Paper and—

An Hon. Member: Read it.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —successive Ministerial Statements. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Do you have a supplemental?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Supplemental, yes.

[Crosstalk]

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, my supplemental is, What exactly are the barriers now that exist for businesses to operate and expand that are based in Bermuda to the Caribbean nation as an associate member of CARICOM?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I actually included in my Ministerial Statement the fact that a select few of businesses that we know of, I mean, just . . . you look in the newspaper yesterday *[sic]* and you can see the record—

An Hon. Member: Today.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —or today. (Thank you, Honourable Member.) The record number of earnings for those very select few that have seen it to be beneficial, have engaged with the Ministry and confirmed it to be beneficial, but unfortunately do not want to see the opportunity for a small Bermudian owner and business owner to be able to, through support from their Government, be able to have access to these opportunities.

So, the question becomes, can the businesses that have already been beneficial in the Caribbean continue to prosper? Yes. But we are trying to unlock that for the Bermudians who have not ordinarily been given that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Second supplemental?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes. Supplemental.

Can the Minister outline what are the supports that will be given to these small business owners and entrepreneurs through full membership of CARICOM? And this was not in the Green Paper. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Green Paper does outline the various initiatives relating to economic support and trade diversification for small business owners.

Specifically, it talks about the collaboration that takes place around the table to foster and encourage the up-tick and advancement of small to medium-sized businesses to advance their presence in the Caribbean and their Caribbean footprint.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary?

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I didn't even get the question out.

Minister and Member from constituency 29, you have a supplemental?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I do.

Minister, do you think that Butterfield Bank have the same negative concerns as the OBA with regard to CARICOM?

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The Minister is imputing improper motive.

We do not . . . it's not a negative concern.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It's not negative. So, you can't frame it that way. He should retract that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. All right.
Any further supplementals?
I recognise the Member from constituency 25.
Member, you have the floor.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yes, the Minister referred to collaboration and roundtables and stuff, but what specific initiatives will be available in a tangible form to small businesses for other specific funding, specific trade agreements, et cetera? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I would have to refer the Honourable Member to the Green Paper because it is included, including the funds.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I'm sure the Minister is inadvertently misleading the House because I've carefully reviewed that paper and it has not outlined any specific tangible benefits that are available to small businesses in Bermuda, and I would happily retract that if she could provide that information on the floor of the House. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.
Oh . . . Just as I call the Minister.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Pages 32 and 33. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: That ends Question Period.
Okay, so Members, moving on.

**CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY
SPEECHES**

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 23, I think it is. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, and good afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I bring condolences for the family of Claire [Howard], who is currently [receiving] a funeral today. She was lost tragically on Bermuda's roads and was a family friend and a member of the Equestrian [Federation] in Bermuda. I wish her family and friends, or pray for her family and friends, as they memorialise her today. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 28, Member and Junior Minister. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

First, I'd like to give condolences to the family of one of my constituents, Ms. Inez Louise Lovell of 10 Cedar and Spice Lane. I associate Minister Weeks.

Also, I would like to give condolences to the family of Mr. Stanley Wade from Somerset—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Associate me.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I associate MP Swan—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —and MP Dill.

If you are a person of Somerset, you know Stanley [was] always up and down the community, So, it again will be . . . it was a shock to hear of his passing. And it will be again a loss of him in our Somerset community.

And then also to Ms. Annette Dickinson, also of Somerset. While I didn't know her personally, I knew her children. And when I found out that she had passed and found that those were her children, I was again shocked and surprised. So, I'd like to send condolences to the family of Ms. Annette Dickinson.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I associate MP Dill.

On a lighter note, Madam Deputy Speaker, last week we had our Bermuda Day holiday. And I would like to send congratulations to all the participants in the bike race. I associate the Minister for Sport. I will associate the whole House.

All the participants in the Sinclair Packwood [Memorial] Race, the [Heritage Day] Junior Classic race, and the full Bermuda Day [Half-]Marathon—to all the participants, congratulations. And then to the winners, again, huge congratulations for the effort, for the result of the effort that you put in.

Short story, Madam Deputy Speaker, I at one point chose to many years ago, about 20 years ago, decided I was going to run 24th of May. I was going to do it unofficially, so I woke up that morning, put on my running shoes, ran down the bottom of my hill and said, *That's enough*. Turned around and went right back home.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: So, I give credit to those who run that 12, or 11.5, mile race, because I only made it about 200 metres.

But the last, [Madam Deputy] Speaker, I'd like to send congratulations, I associate the whole House, to Ms. Kenni Thompson, who recently announced her retirement from football. At the young age of 25, so it is a—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I understand that here. But it is a shock at that young age, but when you read her reasons, I understand. Even myself as a sportsman, sometimes we have to do things that others might not think is the best, but we have to do it for ourself. But I will just say that she has made herself available to represent the women's national team next week in those two home games. So, we wish her a final farewell, and hopefully the Bermuda women's team can win both those games as a farewell for her and her retirement. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the member from constituency 12. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. Thank you, thank you, [Madam Deputy] Speaker. I was almost going to point-of-order to the Honourable Dennis Lister. He forgot to congratulate his wife. They just had a baby!

[Desk thumping and cheering]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Anytime we can have someone adding to the gene pool of Bermuda, we want to say thank you.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We need more babies. And I also did call the Speaker as well. He was on his way to the hospital to see, of course, his new grandchild. It is his first grandchild. And I believe we were talking earlier and you said it is the first on your wife's side as well, grandchild.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I just want to congratulate the Honourable Member for making it happen. I . . . I . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I . . . I—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh! I don't know the baby's name.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Forth! Oh, my goodness, there you go. Excellent!

And I would encourage him to have plenty more, as you know, we need more babies in Bermuda. Thank you, [Madam Deputy] Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 14 *[sic]*, I believe it is.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Wow! Constituency 15, Pembroke East.

The Deputy Speaker: [Constituency] 15. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam, yes, roughing me right up. Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Constituency 14 is Minister Lightbourne. Sorry, I do apologise.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I'm going to start on a sombre note and then work my way up to congratulations. So, I rise this morning to send condolences, unfortunate condolences, to the family of a young man who unfortunately lost his life on the roads in a very tragic circumstance. I'd like to associate the Minister of National Security with this. Mr. Laquan Thomas, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr. Thomas was a constituent of mine, and his mom, as well as a few of his siblings, in the Mission Lane area. Laquan was a young man full of life and was working in the hospitality industry at the time of his unfortunate passing. I did have the opportunity to go and meet with his mother, Ms. Chantelle Thomas. Like I said, a few of his siblings, as well as his father, Mr. Matthew White, which some of you may know as "Chewy." So, I'd like to start and send condolences there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And on a rising up to a more positive note, I'd like to send congratulations to one of my constituents. Many of her know her as an umpire. She's also a young lawyer in our community, Ms. Precious Smith.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: And I'd like to associate Members of the House to that. Ms. Precious Smith has been appointed as one of the first female umpires to a prestigious umpires panel. And I want to wish her well. You

would recall that Ms. Precious Smith was the umpire last year at the Eastern Counties Cricket series. And you know who the champions end up being there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, the Cleveland County Cricket Club.

So, I want to continue to highlight her and her efforts. Those of you who are into the sport of cricket will see Precious Smith every weekend umpiring in the middle of our cricket games. And we hope that one day she will become the first female umpire, I believe, of our Cup Match Classic. So, I would like to congratulate her.

Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do . . . I did say I wanted to be associated, but I did want to get on my feet and put it on the record of Ms. Kenni Thompson. As she did say in her article, she spent a lot of her years outside of Bermuda. So, it's good to hear that, you know, she is going to follow her passions, whatever they may be. And we do have the opportunity to see her play one more time, at the very least, next week, Thursday and Sunday at the National Stadium when the women's team takes on Belize. So, congratulations to her to a very successful career.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. Owen Darrell: And I'll speak more about the success of Bermuda Day at another time. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25. Member, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I bring good tidings today. First of all, there were 230 adult learners who received various certificates and acknowledgements of their progress at the Bermuda College. And as someone myself who's probably spent too much time in the educational system, I want to congratulate all of them.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And certainly, elementary school and others.

I want to congratulate and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

I want to send a belated happy birthday to Ursula Tyrrell, who turned 95 earlier this week.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I associate Member Tucker, Member Tyrrell—

An Hon. Member: Associate the whole House.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I associate the whole House, Madam Deputy Speaker

I want to congratulate my constituent, Jessica Lewis. Some of you may know of her athletic endeavours. She's got a personal best and a gold medal at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix in the 100 metres, only two one-hundredths [0.02] short of the world record.

An Hon. Member: Wow!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I think that's pretty—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We associate the whole House.

And finally, I would like to congratulate Warwick Workmen's [Club] for the victory in the T20 Cricket First Division. So, a lot of things to celebrate today. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 4. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do want to take the opportunity to send my condolences to the family of Ms. Janice Wright. Her children, Dervin, Derek, and Lisa. Ms. Wright was a prominent—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I associate the whole House, the Premier, the whole House in regard to Ms. Janice Wright. Ms. Wright hailed from Chapel of Ease Lane, and she will be sorely missed. Particularly, I always ran into Ms. Wright at our social senior event. She's a social butterfly . . . she was a social butterfly, also immaculate with her dress. She was a seamstress as well. And so big condolences to the family who will, I'm sure, miss the presence of Ms. Wright.

I also want to send condolences to the family of Ms. Leila Chavis, Ms. Chavis did reside at Summerhaven [Residential Home]. However, she is a St. Georgian.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Also [I am] associating Member Robin Tucker, constituency . . .

An Hon. Member: Seven.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —[constituency] 7.

I'm sending condolences to her family, her children, Maurice, Marlon, and Michelle . . . Mrs. Chavis passed suddenly, and again will be sorely missed by the family of Summerhaven, as well as all of those who loved and cared for her. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Oh, sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I do want to acknowledge. I do want to acknowledge.

The Deputy Speaker: You have time. You have time.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I do want to acknowledge all of the students who participated in the "Spring into the Arts."

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. Tinee Furbert: All of the educators, visual art, performing arts persons, creative art spaces, who come to the stage and there is representation from the East [Family of Schools] the West [Family of Schools, and the Central Zone [Family of] Schools. And the children . . . I don't know if you had the opportunity to go in and watch the performances. They definitely were amazing. I know what it's like to get on a stage, and [there] can be stage fright, but our students are amazing. And every year we get to see their amazing talent. So, I want to say a big shout out to all of the students, all of the educators, [and] teachers, who helped bring "Spring into the Arts" back to us every year.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons . . . who wish to speak? I recognise the Minister from constituency 16. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And good afternoon to you.

I would like to start off my remarks by . . . wanting to be associated with the remarks on Ms. Inez Louise Lovell. I didn't know her personally, but she is actually the mother of the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Dana Lovell. So, on behalf of my Ministry and the Bermuda Fire [& Rescue] Service, our hearts and condolences go out to him and his family at this time.

On a more upbeat note, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate Wilmut Trucking Service. And I raise them—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I raise it because anytime one of us as an MP needs any assistance, he and his team are Johnny-on-the-spot. And they come on time, they do what they got to do, and they go over and beyond. So, I just want to take this time to tell him publicly *thank you* for him and his team supporting [constituency] 16 on our last senior's tea. Hats off. And I'll see you next year, good brother, you and your team.

The Deputy Speaker: You hope.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: And before I take my seat, I want to also be associated with the remarks for Ms. Precious Smith, one of my cousins. And I've seen her come from being a football star to going to university, graduating top of her class. And she's come back now, she's umpiring, and knowing her personality, you know, she's not going to quit until she goes to the top of her craft. So, hats off to her.

So that's it for me today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister

Are there any other Members?

Oh, I recognise the Member from constituency 33. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise to join in the condolences for Brother Stanley Wade from the Sandys community and from my family, the Wade family, my cousins. Those who knew Stanley knew him for two things, many things, but two things in particular, if you didn't know him that well. His camera: taking pictures at all the different PLP events. And the brother loved to talk, loved to talk. Oh, my goodness.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: And you know, when you have somebody around who loves to talk, during the last election, the last election, he was at the Sandys PLP headquarters in crunch time. And I said, *Look, my team, my chairman, who runs the Sandys campaign, instructed you to go talk somewhere else because you will distract us from the business at hand*. But he was a staunch follower and supported the PLP. And we will miss . . . and we will miss the chance to talk to him and hear his voice again. And from my family to my cousins and to the rest of the community, I give my deepest condolences.

While on my feet, I'd also like to extend my condolences to [the family of] Brother Edward Eve, a constituent of mine with a long family connection through his sister, my Aunt Gloria. And, you know, he was a character. That's how . . . I'll just leave it at that. But I join with his family in mourning his loss.

On a positive note, I'd like to extend congratulations to my former classmate, Esan Frederick, who's been appointed as the new resort manager at Rosewood. And I am continuing to be proud of this young man. All Members, I'm sure, would like to be associated congratulating this. Bermudians in the tourism industry succeeding and heading towards leadership position is important. And I think that he has been an example in the industry for many years. And I think that he will continue to do well and continue to impress.

While on my feet, I also would like to extend condolences . . . sorry, no, congratulations to a former Member of this Chamber and a former Premier, the Honourable Dr. Ewart F. Brown, who celebrated his birthday earlier this month. And I wish him continued years of health, happiness, joy, and all the rest.

While on my feet, I'd also like to extend congratulations and join on to the remarks made by the Honourable Member Dennis Lister [III] about the participants in the Bermuda Day and to the organisers and everyone involved. I think this year, and you could probably tell by the lack of negative posts on Facebook, I think this year was probably the best. And I commend them for the work they have done and everybody who participated to make it happen.

And before I end, I would like to extend a happy birthday greeting, a happy belated birthday greeting to another former Member of this House, the former MP for Sandys North, the Honourable Lionel Simmons, my father. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 26, the Government Whip. You have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good afternoon, [Madam Deputy] Speaker. Thank you and afternoon to colleagues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to continue on with my line of congratulating our youth in Bermuda who are doing good things. And I know I sort of ran out of time the last time I was here, but I will continue with this one. Anais Godfrey, I want to send congratulations to him. He's the son of Alaire and Andrew Godfrey. He actually graduated with a BA in music technology. Now, he's so multi-talented that he's now going to go on to flight school to be a commercial pilot. So, I certainly wish him all the best and congratulations.

Secondly, I would like to send congratulations to the daughter of Craig and Simonnette Tyrrell. Now, let me declare my interest because she is actually the lovely granddaughter of both Sheila and Neville Tyrrell.

She graduated . . . Camryn graduated from Barry University with a BA in Arts and Television and Digital Media, summa cum laude. So, I certainly want to wish her all the best and I associate her cousin, Minister Weeks, as well . . . and the Honourable [Member] Robin Tucker.

And finally, I certainly would not be able to leave the House today if I don't say this one. I want to wish the very best to my mother-in-law, Valeria Butterfield, who turns 97 on Saturday. And I do wish her all the best.

And again, I'm going to associate her nephew, Minister Weeks, who probably forgot. And so, I hope he doesn't forget on the weekend and go by and say happy birthday to her. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 2. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, I'd like to be associated with the congratulations going to Ms. Butterfield. And I'll save that story for Minister Weeks to tell another time.

But I would like condolences to be sent to the Leader family, Mr. Earl Leader, if it hasn't already been done. I associate the Honourable Member Neville Tyrrell, his regular golfing buddy, on a Monday. And may he rest in peace. And for all his contributions in sport and in music.

I had the honour to attend an event celebrating the life of Ruth Thomas. And that story is one everybody needs to be told time and time again, how this lady is the lady of culture in our society. But her story is one of amazing, amazing grace. And I give thanks for being in her presence, and for her still being here to share her stories with us.

I'd like to be associated with the congratulations going to Mr. Esan Frederick, for his ascension in the hospitality industry. And the Minister responsible for Tourism would like to be associated as well.

And I'm sure the Minister will associate himself with the congratulations to Ms. [Carlita] Lodge, the Director of Culture for a successful Bermuda Day, on which she presided over as director for the very first time. But as one who participated in the parade, seeing it from that angle, it was very well attended. And especially, I say this, I gave congratulations last week to the contribution to culture made by the Freemasons in the Peppercorn Ceremony, how tradition has evolved and become more colourful, breaking old barriers and embracing. I've seen that in the Gombey's, where you have these troupes with all these different vibrant colours and special pride in being different, a little bit different from the next. I think it's just a great example of the growth of our mosaic of Bermuda. And I just want to celebrate that as well.

And also, Mr. Tyler Smith, I think as a professional athlete, just showed you his quality as a professional athlete. He took it to them on a tough, hot, humid day. And he did absolutely well.

And my cousin, Kenni Thompson, not too dissimilar for many great female athletes have retired young. Lorena Ochoa, the world number one golfer taught by my good friend, who I grew up playing golf with in Europe, retired at 28 as world number one. So, it's not uncommon for women to have to retire where men go on and do it much longer.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

I just wanted to associate myself with the condolences of Mrs. Wright. Though I was not privileged enough to meet her, her son, Dervin, and his wife, Belinda, are constituents of mine. And Belinda being my former boss, I had a lot of time to speak with Dervin and her and to form a great relationship with them. And so, I really am—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes. I associate Member . . . well, I'll associate the whole House again. But I think Minister Tinee—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, she associated all of us the first time.

But it would be remiss of me not to rise on my feet to give condolences to one of my constituents who has always had a warm word and a listening ear for me. And so, I just want to send this to the family. And obviously, [there are] not many words you can say for loss of a parent. But, you know, I just wish them strength and endurance during this tough time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 14, and Minister. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise initially on a sombre note to offer a tribute and condolences to the family of Mr. Raymond Beach, specifically Karen Beach, who is my constituent from constituency 14. [I am] also associating my colleagues Minister De Silva, Minister Weeks . . . and Minister Rabain as well. Recognising both his impact for the community, the sudden death, having died in his 64th year. But I do want to offer tribute to his children, Reba, Raymond and Jahmori, also on that loss.

Additionally, I wanted to stand and belatedly offer congratulations to Ms. Tawana Lee, who participated in the Bermuda Day Parade (also a constituent of mine) as a Grand Marshal, who not only was recognised for her role in PHC [Majorettes & Drum Corps] and keeping it alive at a time when majorettes were dying out. It was often a struggle to have them as part of the parade. And I think this year's parade is not only a testament to the effort and investment that the Government has done, but I'm thankful that Tawana had an opportunity to be celebrated for her role, even in a small part, having been a part of the parade as a Grand Marshal and then going back and also then participating in the same parade as a majorette. And so, I do want to celebrate her today.

Additionally, I want to offer congratulations on the 81st anniversary of Devonshire Recreation [Club]. Members of the public should also know that this evening they are having their second annual fair, from 5:00 to 10:00 on the field. And I do encourage members of the public to support them, noting how integral they are to our community and also the consistent efforts that they are making to ensure that the community is engaged. And so, I do want to both celebrate them on their anniversary and on their work in the community.

And finally, I wish to offer recognition for Ms. Kazrah Bashir-Baker, and I hope I announce her name correctly. She was here today, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Gallery. She is an M2 Sandys student who is here on her day release and work shadow to have a feel and flavour of what it is like in Parliament. And so, I want to both acknowledge her and I do invite other Members of this House to also acknowledge her in the usual way.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

And welcome, Ms. Bashir-Baker. Welcome, Ms. Bashir-Baker.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

There . . . Yes, I recognise the Premier and Member from constituency 18. You have the floor.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, though the Honourable Minister from constituency 4 and the Honourable Member for constituency 30, associated the entire House with these remarks, I do wish to just rise to put on the record the condolences being expressed to the family of the late Ms. Janice Cynthia Wright. Without question, as Minister Tinee had said, you could find her at all senior's events and she was even supposed to be in the parade on Bermuda Day as representing your side of the Island, the East End of the Island. And unfortunately passed away.

The thing is, Madam Deputy Speaker, it was only two weeks prior to her passing that I had seen her at her brother-in-law's funeral, who was a constituent of mine, Mr. Rudolph Lawrence, who we had mentioned a couple of weeks ago. And so, I was there at the event [and] saw her. My mom used to do her hair. She said, *How's your mom doing?* I took a picture, all the rest, which I typically do, sent and share with her.

She was such a wonderful lady, bright, smiling all the time, completely energetic and certainly demonstrating that, you know, you are only as old as you feel because even up to her 88th year, she was sprightly, always going around, always immaculately put together and everything else. So, I just wanted to make sure that I could record my condolences on the record.

There is another condolence I wish to record, but I'm going to wait until that is announced publicly and we will do it the next time we are sitting. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 36. Member, you have the floor.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to stand today to, first of all, offer condolences to the family of Seth Gene Taylor. He is the son of David Taylor and Lorna Jean. And I just want to express what a fine young gentleman he was and certainly to express to the family my sincere sadness at hearing of his passing and certainly the legacy that he leaves behind even in his short lifetime will be one that will be continued for many years.

I'd also like to take the opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, to congratulate the Community Restoration Group who a few weeks ago completed a project that brought together countless individuals within the Sandys' community, and in constituency 36, in particular, in the revitalisation, the cleanup and revitalisation of the Mangrove Bay area and the introduction of "Mangrove Nights" in that area.

Our community was immensely elated by this initiative because Mangrove Bay has long been a place where families could come and go and swim and what-not and gather. And in recent years it had gotten into a pretty neglected state. And along with the Department

of Works and Engineering and other individuals, in particular Mr. Bromby, we were able to see that area cleaned up and revitalised, and in particular the introduction of the Mangrove Nights. Because one of the pain points in our constituency has been the Somerset Village and several of the store owners had expressed how really disappointing it is that each day they have to see so many buses going through, you know, going past their stores and never stopping.

So, this was actually a way that we could see people would stop, people would be there and begin to see the Somerset Village revitalised. So, we want to thank the Community Restoration Group and all those who were a part of that initiative and we wish it much success as it goes forward. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 13. Member, you have the floor. Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you Madam Speaker . . . Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to send congratulations to the Loyal Hill community on the holding of their annual Bermuda Day celebration that takes place the Sunday before Bermuda Day. It's an event that started during the COVID-19 time when Bermuda Day wasn't held. And they have come together and it's grown every single year. [And a] special congratulations to the annual go-kart race, although this year there was only one go-kart that made it to the bottom of the hill but it has been renamed upon the passing of Marvin "Duke" Woolridge who was a fantastic participant in this and always built the best go-karts and always prided himself in racing up and down that hill.

But Madam Deputy Speaker, anyone who did attend the event was sure to be treated to a prelude of what was to come for Bermuda Day with the majorettes and with the various bands and various people showing up as well as the crowning of Mr. and Mrs. Loyal Hill. And this year, something a little special, they had like Junior Miss Loyal Hill and Junior Mr. Loyal Hill. So, definitely just congratulations to the organisers who continue to exceed the expectations of that close-knit community as they put together these various events throughout the year.

But certainly, the Bermuda Day event is turning out to be one of the events that is a must-see for anyone who really loves the culture of Bermuda and what it is that we celebrate to being Bermudian.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

There being none, I just want to associate myself with the remarks regarding "Spring into the Arts," a

spectacular event and a spectacular showcase of talent with our young people from the Eastern School Zone. And they certainly acquitted themselves extremely well. And it gives much hope for the future in terms of the type of individuals we can look forward to becoming leaders in some shape or form one day.

I would like to be associated with the remarks regarding Mrs. Wright, and . . . who was a former constituent of mine before the boundary changes. And her son, Derek, in particular, I consider him a friend. And she will be a great loss in their family.

And I would like to [express] condolences for the family of Miss Lena [Wade-]Smith, who is or was a constituent of mine. [I] express condolences to her husband, David. Some of you may not know, she was the grandmother of the woman who clearly made history when she had quintuplets. And so even though only four remained of those babies, Robin Smith's mother, Lena Smith, did pass away. I was just trying to give some context if people didn't know who she was. She was the grandmother of those four, those five quintuplets.

So, with that said, we shall now move on to the next item on the agenda.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Deputy Speaker: There have been none brought to our attention.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

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

The Deputy Speaker: There have been none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: And that will move us to, I think, number one. I think the first one has been removed. The pension . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: It's not?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay.
Premier.

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

The Deputy Speaker: You have the floor.

BILLS

FIRST READINGS

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bills for their first readings so they may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, and the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for those Bills, Premier.

That takes us to the next one, which comes under the Minister of Economy and Labour.
Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: The Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And that brings us to the final Bill to be tabled. And that comes under the Minister of Home Affairs.
Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that

it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Electricity Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There is one.

And that comes under the Member from constituency 23.

Member Richardson.

STANDING ORDER 28(1)

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Madam Deputy Speaker, per the provisions of Standing Order 28(1), I [seek] leave to introduce and read a Bill for the first time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

OPPOSITION BILL

FIRST READING

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
That moves us on.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: I call on Minister Adams.
Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

COMPASS POINT BUILDING APPROVAL TO PURCHASE

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, this serves a formal notice that I intend to move the following motion at the next available opportunity.

"BE IT RESOLVED THAT, in accordance with section 2(1)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1970, this

Honourable House approve the purchase of the Compass Point Building together with all land appurtenant thereto, situate at 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke."

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker: I understand that there are two items for consideration.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: And there are still two.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Yes. Okay. All right.
Minister.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: You need to . . . Okay. Okay.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be read for a second time.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

BILL

SECOND READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, on the 12th of September 2025, the Public Service Superannuation (PSSF Stabilisation) Amendment Act 2025 was

approved in this Honourable House. That Act came into operation on the 1st of October 2025. And that Act fulfilled a long-term commitment of the Government to bring forward reforms to ensure the sustainability of the Public Service Superannuation Fund. The reforms would be phased in and reflect several policy and legislative changes to the Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure that Act properly reflects the policy intent of the 2025 PSSF reforms, and preserves those provisions of the Public Service Superannuation Act 1981 (being the principal Act), [which] were not intended to be changed by the approved reforms, I bring to this Honourable House additional proposed amendments to the Public Service Superannuation (PSSF Stabilisation) Amendment Act 2025. The proposed amendments are intended to align the legislation with the approved policy intent, improve clarity, and remove inconsistencies within the principal Act.

So, this is, of course, just a technical house-keeping Act, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is no change whatsoever insofar as the policy and the matters that were agreed with the unions prior to us advancing these PSSF reforms that we advanced in 2025.

Madam Deputy Speaker, following further analysis of the Act and with the advice of our legal and technical and actuarial teams, a recommendation was to amend the Act to address the following areas:

Contributions to be deducted from salary. this amendment preserves the original policy intent that a person should only join the Fund where there is sufficient time before a compulsory retirement to accrue meaningful pension benefits.

Circumstances entitling contributors to payments. This amendment is intended to preserve the approved retirement framework for both special group and non-special group contributors while clarifying when reduced and unreduced pensions may be taken.

Reduced pension payments upon early retirement. This amendment is intended to maintain internal consistency with the Act.

Age of compulsory retirement and deferred pensions. This amendment is intended to ensure the compulsory retirement provisions and deferred pensions remain consistent with the revised retirement and pension provisions of the revised Act.

And then, service qualifying for pension. This amendment is intended to preserve the added service benefit of up to five additional years of service for lower ranking officers in the special group, notwithstanding the phased increase in retirement age.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I indicated in my budget speech delivered to the Honourable House on the 20th of February 2026, this Government has delivered on its promise to reform the PSSF and began the road to stabilising the Fund and put the pension plan on a stronger footing for the longer term.

And it's important to note, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the reason why it is important that we did that, not just for matters related to retirees who will have their pension, but it's also to deal . . . or future retirees, so their pension will be there. But it also created the room for us to increase retirees' pensions as well, noting that those pension increases have been frozen since 2014. And earlier today, I did table a Bill to increase public sector retirees' pensions by 10 per cent.

There have been a lot of questions that have come from this. A lot of questions from Honourable Members. And so, I just want to take some time, although it's not specifically with this Bill, just to clarify this matter, which the Bill—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Anticipation]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is anticipating debate.

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm not anticipating debate.

[Inaudible]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I am not anticipating debate.

I think what is important to note is that this is talking about what happened on this, Honourable Member. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, you've already ruled. So let me go forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important to note that the public sector retirees will get an increase of 10 per cent on their pensions. That increase is effective April 1. However, as we are just tabling the Bill and the matters will go through, and because we have to deal with all the other increases in public sector pay, that those matters will be paid in October, but they will be backdated to April.

So, I think it's just important at this point in time to note while we are discussing matters related to the public sector pension funds that the changes that we made allowed us the space to be able to increase public sector pensions for retirees without compromising the long-term effects of the Fund. And that's why it's important for these changes to come into place, because it has allowed us, as stated in the Budget Statement, to be able to increase public sector retiree pensions by 10 per cent.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, as I close, Madam Deputy Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Anticipation]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: the Premier continues to anticipate debate on items on the Order Paper for [the] next session.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

I'm not sure whether or not he is actually anticipating a debate as opposed to just mentioning. Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I proceed?

[No audible response]

Hon. E. David Burt: It's like the Member almost wants to be renamed to "Mr. Point of Order." It's all the time.

But anyhow, as I close, Madam Deputy Speaker, these proposed amendments will ensure we get it right for both current and future public officers' retirement plans. As it has been, this Government has pressed forward on these changes. Challenges notwithstanding have brought stability to our Public Sector Pension Fund. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you do have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Acting President *[sic]*. Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: I got you.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker.
This is my old seat.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, and just for the knowledge of the House, because his microphone is not working, I've allowed him to sit there so that he can speak without having to lean in front of the Member who actually does sit there.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I'm grateful for your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Of course. Go right ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Clearly, the One Bermuda Alliance, when these reforms were originally presented, certainly supported them. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it has been very important to us for a long time, and we had called for a very, very long time, that these reforms be made.

And as such, we certainly do support the technical amendments in this Bill to ensure that everything is carried out properly and all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed. And therefore, we have no concerns with this Bill. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this Amendment Act?

There being none, I call on the respective Minister and Premier.

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

I move the Bill be now committed.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Bill be committed.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So, I call on Member Smith to come and take the seat.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 3:04 pm

[Ms. Linda Smith, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the Whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister in charge to proceed. Minister, you have the floor.

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

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

The Chairman: The Minister has made a motion that all the clauses be moved.

Are there any objections?

If there are no objections, please proceed.

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

Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2, just for ease of reference, I'm reading the explanatory memorandum, so we can all follow along.

Clause 2 repeals and replaces subsections (3) and (3A) of section 12 ("Contributions to be deducted from salary") as follows—

Subsection (3) applies to teachers whose first employment with the Government commences upon having attained the age of 60 years (or 61 or 62 years, as the case may be). In order for such persons to elect to contribute to the Fund and receive any benefit from the Fund the period between their first employment and the age of compulsory retirement must be at least eight years.

Subsection (3A) applies to all other persons employed by the Government (except police officers, fire officers, prison officers, and members of staff of the Bermuda Regiment) whose first employment with the Government commences upon having attained the age of 60 years (or 61 or 62 years, as the case may be). Similar to subsection (3), in order for such persons to elect to contribute to the Fund and to receive any benefit from the Fund the period between their first employment and the age of compulsory retirement must be at least eight years.

Clause 3 amends subsection (1)(a) and (b) and the proviso to section 19 ("Circumstances entitling contributor to payment") by retaining the age of retirement at the age first stated in section 19(1)(a) and (b) of the principal Act. With respect to police officers below the rank of superintendent, and fire officers below the rank of divisional officers, such officers maintain the ability to retire at the earlier of the age they complete 25 years of service and the mandatory retirement age. With respect to prison officers below the rank of deputy commissioner, such officers maintain the ability to retire at the earlier of the age they complete 21 years of service and the mandatory retirement age. The proviso is amended to allow those officers who retire based on completing 25 years of service or 21 years of service [or on completing 21 years of service] in subparagraphs (b) to (f) of paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) to elect to receive reduced pension payments beginning at the age of 50 years.

Clause 3 also repeals and replaces [sub]section (1)(d) of section 19 by reverting to the former wording to allow contributors to whom that paragraph applies to retire at the age of 60 years.

Clause 4 amends section 19A ("Reduced pension payments upon early retirement") as a result of the numbering amendments made in this Bill to paragraph (iv) of the proviso to section 19(1) of the principal Act.

Clause 5 amends subsections (1), (2) and (4) of section 22 ("Age of compulsory retirement"). As a result of the amendments made to section 19(1)(a) and (b), the words "first occurring" in subsection (1) of section 22 are no longer required. The amendment to subsection (2) extends the period of compulsory retirement

(in respect of current contributors to whom that provision applies) to the year 2033. Subsection (4) is amended to provide for a pension not to be deferred if a contributor is required to retire by the Governor under section 22.

Clause 6 amends section 24A ("Special provision for certain contributors") as a result of the numbering amendments made in this Bill to paragraph (iv) of the proviso to section 19(1) of the principal Act.

Clause 7 amends paragraph (a) of section 33 ("Rate of pension") by removing the word "average" as the rate relating to contributors to whom that paragraph applies will be based on the contributor's salary immediately preceding the date of [his] retirement.

Clause 8 repeals and replaces the proviso to section 34 ("Service qualifying for pension") by retaining the added service benefit with respect to police officers below the rank of superintendent, fire officers below the rank of divisional officer, prison officers below the rank of deputy commissioner, and members of staff of the Bermuda Regiment based on [the] ages referenced in section 19(1)(d) and paragraph (iv)(b), (c), (d), (e) or (f) of the proviso to section 19(1).

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 9 *[sic]* be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Excuse me?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Anybody wish to speak on the motion?

No. Okay.

Any objections?

Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through [8] passed.]

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

I move that clauses then 1 through 9 *[sic]* be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 9 *[sic]* be approved.

Are there any objections?

Approved.

Minister.

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

Just [to] correct the record it is clauses 1 through 8. I added a mystery clause.

The Chairman: Okay, but I did hear [clause] 9.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: No, I said [clause] 9.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: I said it incorrectly.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I just wanted to correct the record. That was not your fault. That was 100 per cent my fault.

The Chairman: Thank you. I feel better. Thank you.

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

I move that the preamble be approved.

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

[Would] anyone like to speak on that motion?

If not, is there any objection to that motion?

If there's no objection, the motion is moved.

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

I move the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Would anyone like to speak to that?

If not, are there any objections?

If there are no objections to that motion, then it is agreed the Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:11 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Deputy Speaker: Members, it has been agreed that the Bill entitled Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be reported to the House as printed.

[Are there] any objections to that?

There are none.

So, that finishes [Order] No. 1 on the Order Paper. We now move to the consideration of the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24. Yes.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 43(4) and 43(5), I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year [2023/24] be approved and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So moved.

I call on the Member from constituency 22.

House in Committee at 3:12 pm

[Mr. Scott Pearman, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

The Chairman: Thank you, Members. We are now in the Committee of Supply to consider . . . [Are] we going to do one at a time? Minister, one at a time? Yes.

[We are now in the Committee of Supply] to consider the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24.

Minister, you have the floor.

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

This Schedule identifies five items totalling \$16,701,803 to be included in Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for [financial] year 2023/24 made up of \$16,241,638 on current account and \$460,165 on capital account. Honourable Members will note and respect the total supplementary estimate for this year of the aforementioned \$16,701,803 are all technical supplementaries. A technical supplementary indicates that the requirement for additional funding can be met and was met within the originally appropriated estimates. However, they cannot be transferred since they are appropriated within another Ministry or capital account.

Following the completion of the 2023/24 financial statement on December 24, 2024, the total final current account spending for 2023/24 was \$977.5 million, which was \$4.9 million more than the original estimate of \$972.6 million. Interest and guarantee management costs were \$131.5 million, \$1.1 million [more] than the original estimate of \$130.4 million. Total

revenues in that year were \$1.177 billion or \$21.18 million higher than the original budget of \$1.16 billion.

Based upon the above factors, the budget deficits for the fiscal year 2023 . . . sorry, let me make sure I get this right. Got it. The budget deficit for fiscal year 2023/24 was \$29.5 million, \$14 million less than the original estimate of \$43.5 million. This is the third consecutive fiscal year where the fiscal deficit was less than originally forecast.

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for [financial] year 2023/24 is directly related to

- Additional expenditures associated with the Ministry of Public Works stock adjustment for transition to Artemis, a building at the Quarry, and higher inventory usage; higher insurance premiums due to transition of a multiyear agreement, and Quarry transport products recharged in capital lease liabilities.
- Ministry of National Security GEHI claims for police officers on budget credit card commissions within customs, and additional overtime required within Department of Corrections, [and] fire services due to staff shortages.
- Total capital account spending for fiscal year 2023/24 was \$97.1 million, or \$1.1 million [above] the original budget of \$96 million. On the capital account, the total of \$460,000 additional capital expenditures relate to Ferry Bow Loading relocation; major building upgrade projects, and water and sewage capital maintenance at the Tynes Bay Waste-to-Energy facility.

In respect of capital expenditures, savings from existing capital projects have been identified. However, a technical supplementary is required to increase each overspent total authorised figure in 2023/24.

Honourable Members will recall the criteria for determining debatable supplementary estimates require that all items on the current account be debated if the total current account spend of a Ministry shows an increase of greater than 10 per cent, or \$250,000 when compared to the original estimate.

All capital items are debatable. Applying the criteria I've just described, all items on the current account and capital account are debatable. I would therefore move approval of the following items: Current account 1 through 2, all debatable. Capital account 3 through 5, all debatable.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

I call on the Honourable Minister in charge, and that that would be the item 1, Head 36, which would be the Ministry of Public Works.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Minister, while you're on your feet, forgive me for asking you this question, but I believe I'd

heard the Premier to say that item 1 would be debatable, but—

Hon. E. David Burt: All debatable.

The Chairman: It is debatable. Thank you. Great.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: I have clarification.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: It is debatable. Okay, understood.

Minister, it has been confirmed that this item and the three heads that fall under this item, all of which are in your Ministry, are in fact debatable, and therefore you have the floor in relation to Supplementary [Estimate] [item] 1, Head 36, and [that] it now be taken under consideration.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

It has been moved that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 are now taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 will now be taken under consideration.

Minister, you have the floor.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as detailed in Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment seeks approval for supplementary provisions under current expenditure totalling \$8,668,876 and under capital expenditure totalling \$460,165.

Mr. Chairman, for clarity, I will address each department in turn, outlining first the current expenditure adjustments followed by capital expenditure adjustments. Mr. Chairman, I begin with the Ministry Headquarters, Head 36.

HEAD 36—MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

Hon. Jache Adams: Under the current expenditure, two adjustments are required, both relating to inventory. During the 2023/24 financial year, the Ministry's Stores Section, which is responsible for inventory management, relocated to a new facility at the Government Quarry. As part of this transition, a full reconciliation of inventory was undertaken. This resulted in a one-time adjustment to account for the disposal of obsolete stock

and to correct historical inventory records totalling \$630,000. Additionally, inventory usage during this fiscal year exceeded initial projections, reflecting higher operational activity across the Ministry. This resulted in a further \$400,000 in stock consumption. Mr. Chairman, there are no capital supplements required under this head.

HEAD 81—PUBLIC LANDS AND BUILDINGS

Hon. Jache Adams: Under current expenditure, a supplementary provision of \$1.2 million is required due to higher than expected insurance premiums. As Honourable Members are aware, the department is responsible for maintaining over 800 Government properties, the majority of which are insured and is therefore directly impacted by changes in insurance costs.

Mr. Chairman, there are two capital supplements required for this department. The first, in the amount of \$7,381, relates to the relocation of the Department of Marine and Ports Ferry Maintenance Facility. Honourable Members may be aware that this project was managed by the Department of Public Lands and Buildings and involved consolidating Marine and Ports Ferry Maintenance operations from multiple locations in Dockyard in Hamilton into a single, centralised facility in Dockyard. This adjustment reflects an administrative oversight that required an increase in the total allocated funding level, which has now been corrected.

The second capital supplemental, in the amount of \$115,075, relates to emergency works to repair central air conditioning units at two government buildings, namely the Government Administration Building and Global House.

HEAD 82—WORKS AND ENGINEERING

Hon. Jache Adams: Under current expenditure, a supplementary provision of \$6,038,876 is required to account for fuel supply, equipment maintenance, and asphalt production.

Mr. Chairman, what does this mean in practical terms? As Honourable Members are aware, the department's Quarry Section maintains much of the Government's land-based vehicle and heavy equipment fleet. While these assets are owned centrally, they are often operated by other departments.

For example, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Health make continuous use of vehicles owned by Works and Engineering. When these vehicles require fuel, they refuel at Quarry-managed sites. When servicing is needed, it is carried out by department mechanics. If vehicles are damaged, they are returned to the Quarry for repair. Historically, these services were recovered through a recharge mechanism whereby the operating department reimbursed the Department of Works and Engineering. However, this practice has not been consistently occurring within the current financial framework.

A similar arrangement exists for asphalt production, where the Quarry Section is responsible for production while the Highway Section is responsible for paving. As a result, costs that would previously have been distributed across departments have instead been absorbed entirely within Head 82 for this financial year.

Mr. Chairman, to be clear, this is not the result of any fault by any government entity or individual. Rather, it reflects limitations in an older system of recording operational costs, which is being modernised. Importantly, this does not represent an increase in overall government spending. It is, in fact, the reallocation of operational expenses between departments at the end of the fiscal year.

The Ministry continues to work closely with the Ministry of Finance to modernise these processes and improve the accuracy and transparency of cost allocation going forward.

Mr. Chairman, a further supplementary provision of \$400,000 is required under current expenditure for Head 82. This relates to a technical audit adjustment associated with the unwinding of capital lease liabilities rather than new expenditure.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to the request for a capital expenditure supplemental in the amount of \$337,709 in support of the Water and Sewage Capital Maintenance Programme. During the 2023/24 financial year, the department identified a significant leak in Prospect Water Reservoir 1, a critical asset that holds millions of gallons of potable water for public use. Emergency repair works were initiated immediately to contain the issue and maintain system integrity.

During this period, the department was required to procure water from the private sector to ensure the continued and uninterrupted delivery of essential services to the public.

The Chairman: Minister, could I just pause you for a moment? We were only dealing with item 1. I don't mind dealing with the capital items as long as there's no objection.

Does anyone have an objection to the Minister deal with capital?

No, no objection. Please continue.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: So, we're now doing Items 1 and 5. Yes.

Are you also speaking to public lands and buildings at item 4?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

The Chairman: And you're not doing Marine and Ports, though?

Hon. Jache Adams: No.

The Chairman: Okay. So, we are now listening to the Minister who is taking under consideration item 1, which has already been addressed, and items 4 and 5 with no objection from the House. Thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman . . . I mean, Mr. Chairman, I'm on my last paragraph.

The Chairman: Sorry.

Hon. Jache Adams: No problem.

While the immediate repairs have been completed, more comprehensive refurbishment works are planned for this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Is there anyone who wishes to speak to Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 in relation to item 1, Heads 36, 81, 82, or items 4 or 5?

I recognise the Honourable Member for [constituency] 25.

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

I'm grateful to the Minister for the explanations, especially with respect to the lack of the recharges happening at the appropriate times. I'm glad to hear that the system is being improved. Obviously, controlling and managing costs of departments is important. I know some of these departments might have a lot of fuel costs as they drive around. So perhaps some FinTech could be applied to that.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I don't know. We seem to be big on that.

But I do have a material question about the insurance. I think we all understand about insurances going up, but I am really struggling to understand why it has taken us two years to find out about this increased insurance premium. So, I would love if the Minister could talk about that.

And in general, most of my concerns have to do with the long delays on some of these items. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you to MP DeCouto.

Is there any other Member who wishes to speak on items 1, 4, or 5?

I recognise the Honourable Member for constituency 12, MP Cannonier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, and good afternoon.

Yes. Just on [item] 1, Public Works Headquarters, under stock adjustments, and I know that this has been . . . this is always an ongoing challenge within the Ministry. And we are talking about quite a bit of monies here. What I wanted to find out a little more about is

how we are advancing as far as getting workers and civil servants using more updated software. I recognise that in the past, when we were introducing new software to help them with stock adjustments and to be more accurate so we're not ordering wrong items, which was a big problem, people were still insisting on using Excel spreadsheets and the likes to do it. So how are we advancing when it comes to getting our people to order items and to make these stock adjustments come to an end, basically, so that we're much better at it and it's not in the tune of what we got over, just slightly over stock adjustments and inventory usage over a million dollars here?

Just a little more information about where we stand with updating and getting our people to use more updated systems to get us in a better place with stock.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Thank you, MP Cannonier.

Is there any other Member who wishes to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none . . . Minister, thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Honourable Members for their questions.

In relation to the insurance costs raised by the Member from [constituency] 25, I will note that the reason, as the Minister of Finance alluded to earlier, you'll recall there was a period where we were doing insurance in several years at a time, and the decision was to transition to a more annual payment, and thus it caused an increase because we are no longer doing sort of three years of payments instead of doing annually.

For the Honourable Member from [constituency] 12, I will say that considerable effort is being made, particularly in terms of investment and the software, to improve our inventory records. What is being referred to in this supplemental is as a result of the transition. We found that there was some inventory that was extremely old and obsolete that just had to be in stock for . . . Some were in there for decades, if I am being honest. And so the transition just simply allowed us to sort of correct our records and modify.

You will note that in the 2026/27 Budget, it was alluded [to] in terms of restructuring and improvements, one of which is the inventory changes that we are making. And so, the Ministry is reviewing our internal processes right now and certainly updates on the progress that we are making will be provided in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member, or Honourable Minister, rather.

Does any other Member wish to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none, Honourable Minister, may I ask that you move—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Chairman, I still—

The Chairman: I am sorry. I am so sorry. I did not see you, MP DeCouto. Please.

Honourable Member for constituency 25 has the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: [I am] grateful for the Minister's explanation about the insurance. I am still struggling with the fact that it has taken over two and a half years to find out about the million-dollar insurance increase, given that, for example, last year we would have debated the budget with the actuals for this year already sorted out, and I am trying to understand what the reason for that delay was.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Honourable Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will help.
Sometimes it is audit, so things can come up in audit—

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, do you yield?

Hon. E. David Burt: I was trying to answer the question.

Hon. Jache Adams: I yield the question to the Minister of Finance.

The Chairman: There we go. Thank you.
Honourable Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: I was trying to stand up and answer the question. You know, I am a Minister too. I thought you said "Minister." I thought you were talking to me.

The Chairman: [I] just thought I would check—

Hon. E. David Burt: Heh, heh.

The Chairman: That is protocol.
Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: But the answer is, some of the time these things come up in audit, and that is the reason why sometimes it is late. So, when audit comes, we need to make sure the supplementary estimates match up to what comes back in audit.

The Chairman: Does any other Member wish to speak to items 1, 4, [or] 5?
I recognise the MP for constituency 25, MP DeCouto—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, I—

The Chairman: You have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Thank you, Mr. Premier and Minister of Finance.

I would love to know more about the issue that came up during audit around this million-dollars-of-insurance premium. I would love to know: Was it [a] premium that was missed? Was it just in the wrong account? . . . and so forth. So, thank you for giving us that information, and I look forward to some more colour on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Does any other Member wish to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?
There being none, will the Government Minister kindly address the question posed?
Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am quite certain that we do not have that information offhand, but the reality is that things come up during audit. That is just what it is. And that is the reason why we are bringing a supplementary estimate all this way, just to make sure that we match up with where our expenses are, where it is. [I am] happy to see if that additional information can be sought and acquired, but I do not have that information right now. I am explaining to you when we have these types of things, it is typically from an audit perspective. I am uncertain if any technical officer is emailing, but I am saying on the broader topic this is the reason why these things come up.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.
Is there any other Member who wishes to pose questions on items 1, 4, or 5?
I recognise—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Just for the . . . Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: —the MP for constituency 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: For the record, I find it highly unsatisfactory that we have a million-dollar supplemental, and the Premier does not know the details.
Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, MP.
Is there any other Member who—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. . . . Mr. . . .

The Chairman: No. I—

Hon. E. David Burt: I must say—

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: —it is not the question that we do not know. We do not have that information off the top of the head.

You are asking what led to the audit point. The Minister gave the explanation of the things. You are asking a specific question of the audit point. Ministers are not inside of audit meetings. That is the way it works. If you really want to find out what happens, call the Auditor General in front of the Public Accounts Committee. But we have also said, if you want, put forward, and we gave an undertaking that we will try to get you the answer.

I would ask, Honourable Chairman, if the Opposition Leader can control his Members.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

The Chairman: I think . . . I think—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Chairman, I am—

The Chairman: Excuse me, just for a minute.

We are in Committee, okay? We are in Committee. Let's not . . . Let's not, . . . It is not general debate.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister, and your point has been made and is for the record.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none, will one of the Government Ministers (I suppose it is you, Honourable Minister) please move that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be approved?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be approved.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

It has been moved that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 are hereby approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works, Head 36; Public Land and Buildings, Head 81; Works and Engineering, Head 82 passed.]

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, would you like to move item 4?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 4, Heads 36, 81, and 82 *[sic]* be approved.

The Chairman: No, I think it is item 4, Head 65. Is it?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, [Head] 65.

The Chairman: Thank you.

It has been moved that item 4, Head 65, be approved. Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none; it is approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works, Head 65, Public Lands and Buildings passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, if you could kindly move item 5, Head 65 as well . . .

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 4 *[sic]*, Head 64 . . . Sorry—

The Chairman: Five.

Hon. Jache Adams: —item 5, Head 65 be approved as well.

The Chairman: It has been moved by the Honourable Minister that item 5, Head 65, be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 5, Head 65 is approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works, Head 65, Works and Engineering passed.]

The Chairman: We now move on to item 2, which I believe is for the Minister of National Security. Yes.

Minister, you have the floor.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon to you.

I move that Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

It has been moved that item 2, Heads 7, 12 . . . you moved it 45 and then 25, so I will follow your lead.—

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Well, yes, [Head] 45.

The Chairman: —be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 do be taken under consideration.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Just as an FYI to you, Mr. Chairman, the reason I put 45 before 25 is that 25 is Corrections, and that is no longer under my Ministry. So, I am going to do my current Ministry as well.

The Chairman: Are you going to deal with Head 25 as well, nonetheless?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I will. I will. Yes.

The Chairman: [I am] grateful, Minister. Please continue.

HEAD 7—BERMUDA POLICE SERVICE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: So, Head 7, the overspend is \$1,165,566 [million] *[sic]*. Mr. Chairman, that . . . [\$1,165,5]68 [million], I am sorry . . . This overspend, Mr. Chairman, is the Condition of Service section, which states “all members of the [Bermuda] Police Service shall be entitled, without payment, to such medical advice and treatment . . .” So, to ensure that the premise of this article is met, GEHI [Government Employee Health Insurance] pays all copayments on behalf of police officers. So, at the year-end 2023/24, the BPS [Bermuda Police Service] received several outstanding invoices from GEHI related to coverage. GEHI had paid on behalf of the Bermuda Police Service in respect of co-payments for various police officers. So, that is the result of that \$1.1 million, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

HEAD 12—CUSTOMS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay. Head 12—the overspend can be linked to the [credit] card commission charges. No budget was provided in 2023/24 for [credit] card commission charges, but actual expenditure was . . . I am just jumping, Mr. Chairman . . . \$154,928.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Moving right on to Head 25. I am Head . . . I said Head 45 first, and then I will come back to [Head] 25.

The Chairman: Yes, Fire Services.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay.

The Chairman: Yes.

HEAD 45—FIRE SERVICES

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: So, the overspend for Fire [Services] relates to staffing levels. The number of

actual full-time equivalents was 140, which is significantly lower than the original estimate of 156 for the financial year 2023/24. So, the greatest impact was experienced within the operations division, which functioned with only 57 full-time equivalents below the original projection.

Also, Mr. Chairman, the East End Ambulance Service, the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service [BFRS], runs a nightly ambulance service at the Island's East End from 6:00 pm to 8:00 am, while the Bermuda Hospitals Board [BHB] handles the daytime coverage. So, due to limited resources and staff shortages, the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service incurred overtime for two full-time EMTs each night, which equates to approximately \$900,000 overtime for the year 2023/24. Combined approximately . . . was . . . incurred . . . with . . . \$3,403,586 was incurred in overtime costs.

Other factors that impacted overtime include vacation, sick leave, and firefighter overseas travel to complete mandatory revalidation training. Overseas consultants were engaged to work at the L. F. Wade International Airport until Bermudians could be hired. An expenditure of \$1,138,987 was incurred during the 2023/24 financial year as a conclusion of this project. The BFRS hired and trained 23 Bermudians to replace the consultant firefighters at the L. F. Wade International Airport. Forty aircraft rescue firefighters travelled overseas to complete mandatory revalidation training to comply with the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority regulatory requirements to support operations at the L. F. Wade International Airport. This resulted in an expenditure of \$170,685 above the approved estimate for the training of the business unit 55150. Other expenditure is attributed to contracted salary, ex gratia, and benefit awards negotiated with the unions.

This concludes my explanation, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any Members who wish to speak on item 2, Heads 7, 12, 25, or 45?

Yes. I recognise the Honourable Member Jarion Richardson, MP.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, having reviewed these estimates, they raise concerns. I have several questions to put to the Minister, but I will go through my concerns first.

In Head 45, the largest National Security item in the supplement is for Fire Services seeking \$4.3 million for overtime. And when I look back at the 2023/24 Budget Book, it includes the 2022/23 revised estimate, a total budget of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service at \$17 million, and then it was reduced to \$14.8 million. So, the budgetary planning process led to someone projecting that they are going to spend significantly less money in the space of \$3 million. So, my question is,

now that the Government has returned for a \$4.3 million increase that is in overtime, this looks like an area of workforce planning, an area where it is lacking.

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, on Head 25, we are looking at a request of [\$]1.8 [million] or [\$]1.9 [million] in overtime payments. And we already saw an increase in the 2023/24 budget estimates. So, we were already raising how much we were budgeting, and then we are going back again, sometime later, and getting yet again more money, which again speaks to an issue with planning.

The GEHI, I will simply put as a matter of a question, but my concern relates to the length of time for the copays to arrive in house.

And lastly, my concern around the credit card on Head 12, \$154,928 for credit card commission—I am not entirely sure what that would entail, given that it is not an emergency public safety issue, and yet it appears alongside them.

So, my questions to the Honourable Minister as it relates to the 2023/24 Ministry of National Security supplements is, first, Why is more than 80 per cent of the 2023/24 National Security supplemental overtime? Why is it overtime? And what does that say about our workforce planning? My second question is, Why was Fire Services budgeted at \$14.8 million when the prior year's revised estimate was \$17 million? In other words, why did we reduce it? And then why are we now coming back looking for \$4.3 [million] more for the budget, specifically for overtime?

And my third question is, What are the main drivers of \$1.9 [million] or \$1.8 million in the Corrections overtime? And finally, Mr. Chairman, which of these items was unforeseen? Because a lot of these look like they could have been anticipated.

I will modify one of my questions to the Honourable Minister who spoke to the original projection, or Head 45, about the East End Ambulance and the requirement for two full-time EMTs overnight. Can he outline the nature of the relationship between the Bermuda Hospitals Board and the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, because I am not sure I am understanding the logic in why BFRS is providing this when it is a Hospitals Board issue? And would we not be anticipating getting compensated from their line item budgets instead of out of our budget?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, MP Richardson.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

Yes, I recognise MP Cannonier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you.

[I have] just one question. Under Police, [Head] 7, the GEHI claims, [I am] just curious. How long . . . Considering the fact that we are talking 2023/24 budget—we are into 2026/27 budget now—how long can a claim be outstanding? I do not know myself with

GEHI. But how long can a claim be outstanding? And if there is a time, what is that time or cutoff date that you can then put a claim in after a few years?

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 2 and the heads thereunder?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: No.

There being none, Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will start with Mr. Cannonier first. I do not have the answer as to how long a claim could be outstanding, but I will try to find that answer.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay. Yes. Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Not just for you but for us. I have no idea.

Now, [regarding] the GEHI payments, to the Honourable Member from [constituency] 23, his first question was the GEHI payments also from Head 7. I do not know how long it takes for them to get in-house, and I think that is just a processing issue, probably not by Police [Service] but between GEHI and the Police [Service]. So not sure on that.

Now, the card payments, . . . The card payments are just processing payments that happen during the course of the credit and debit card transactions. So why they are with the operational portion, I am not sure, but the overspend is just linked to [credit] card commission charges. There is not much else I could explain as to why they are together.

Now, the EMT situation down at the St. George's Fire Service, is a partnership between BHB and the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service. The Bermuda Fire and Rescue operates the ambulance from 8:00 pm in the evening until 6:00 am in the morning, and BHB does the 6:00 am to the 8:00 pm [shift]. That partnership is a part of an MOU [a memorandum of understanding], and it has been operating like that for the last, I think, five, six, maybe, or longer years. And as a result, the BFRS addresses or takes care of and pays the hours from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am, and from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, the BHB picks up their tab.

And Corrections, the overtime in Corrections—it comes down to a staff shortage. It is a uniformed services issue that we have that as much as we do recruitment two, three, maybe four (I want to say four) times a year, sometimes two, maybe three times a year, we are still having difficulty getting the number of persons needed to operate not only Corrections but other uniformed services. So, until we are able to solve that issue and get in the requisite number of employees needed, overtime is going to be a part of the equation.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

Yes, I see Honourable Member Jarion Richardson, constituency 23.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanations and would reiterate, Why are we looking at that \$17 million budgeting in 2022/23 and then [in] 2023/24 where we see it reduced to \$14 million, but now we are going to see that increase in \$4.3 [million]?

The Minister, I believe, said that this is due to the recruiting issue, and we also see that in Corrections as a recruiting issue. So, if the Honourable Member could speak to . . . I think our obligation here, Mr. Chairman, is to ensure that the money is well spent, that we are planning as much as possible and getting ahead of these problems. And these are problems. And, as Kissinger said, *an issue ignored is a crisis invited*. So, the question for us, I believe, is, What are we doing to make sure this stops happening? Not so much why it happened now.

And so, I thank the Honourable Minister for his comments on what are we doing to get ahead of this so that we do not have this exact same scenario next year.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We all want to get to the bottom of this here. All we can do is just keep trying, keep recruiting. And where we need to have overseas recruitment, we do. But this is a situation that is ongoing. And we just keep on recruiting, keep on recruiting, keep on recruiting hopefully till we get to the point that we have the requisite numbers to help to keep Bermuda safe.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member have questions on item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

There being none, Honourable Minister, would you like to move item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

Thank you.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 be approved.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

It has been moved that item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 are hereby approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of National Security, Head 7 Bermuda Police Service; Head 12, Customs; Head 25,

Corrections; and Head 45, Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service passed]

The Chairman: I think we have one last item, [item] 3. And is Minister Darrell behind you, Minister? I cannot see. Yes, there he is.

Minister Darrell, we have item 3. Would you like to move that item 3 be taken under consideration?

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND TRANSPORT, CULTURE AND SPORT

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

I move that item 3, Head 65 now be taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

It has been moved that item 3, Head 65 now be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, Minister, you have the floor.

HEAD 65—MARINE AND PORTS

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, Honourable Members of this House will be aware that the Department of Marine and Ports Services, through the Works and Engineering section, undertook infrastructure improvements at Hunter's Wharf to support the efficient operation of the ferry service. Two piles were installed to provide lay-by berthing for ferries, so vessels would not need to thrust into the dock while waiting between scheduled services.

In addition to the replacement of winches, controls, and cables for the Rockaway Bow Loading Facility, the project had a TAF of \$250,000, and a total final expenditure was \$265,668. This represents an overspend of \$15,668, as explained below.

This project recorded an overspend of \$7,381 in 2023/24, and \$8,287 in 2024/25, representing approximately 3 per cent of the total project's cost in each year. The variance was due to minor, unanticipated technical adjustments that were required to successfully and safely complete the project.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Is there any Member who wishes to speak to item 3 . . . item 3, Head 65, rather.

There being none, Minister, would you like to move it be approved?

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

I now move that item 3, Head 65 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 3, Head 65 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, Head 65, Capital Development, passed.]

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Oh, I am sorry. I apologise. I did not invite the Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you. I did not know we were done.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: My sincere apologies.

The Chairman: No, no. My apologies, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 as printed be reported to the House.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 be approved by the Committee and reported to the House as printed.
No objection; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24 was considered by the Committee of Supply and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:55 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) 2023/24

The Deputy Speaker: Members, it has been agreed that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 be reported to the House as printed, and there are no objections to that. That was agreed to.

That takes us to the third item of the day, which is consideration of the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

In accordance with Standing Order 43(4) and 43(5), I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year [2024/25] be approved and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider such.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that we resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

Are there any objections?

There are none. So moved.

I call on the Member from constituency 22 to assume the Chair.

House in Committee at 3:56 pm

[Mr. Scott Pearman, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) 2024/25

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in the Committee of Supply for consideration of Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

I now call upon the Honourable Minister of Finance to present in relation to the supplementary.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Long time no see.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: All right.

Mr. Chairman, this schedule identifies five items totalling \$20,446,149 to be included in the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25, made up of \$17,022,625 on current accounts and \$3,423,524 on capital accounts.

Honourable Members will note and respect the total Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 that the \$20,446,14[9] are all a technical supplementary. A technical supplementary indicates requirement for additional funding can be met within the original appropriate estimates, however, cannot be transferred since they are appropriated within another Ministry or capital account.

Following the completion of the 2024/25 financial statements on December 9, 2025, the final total current account spending for fiscal year 2024/25 was \$1 billion, which was \$14 million, or 1.4 per cent more than the original estimate of \$992 million.

Debt service and guarantee management costs were \$129 million, which is approximately \$1 million more than the original estimate of \$128 million.

Total revenues in fiscal year 2024/25 were \$1.266 billion, or \$33.3 million, [or] 2.7 per cent higher than the original budget of \$1.232 billion.

Based on the above factors, the budget surplus—I say budget surplus—was \$29 million above the original budget surplus of \$210,000, and this was the first budget surplus achieved in 21 years.

Supplementary Estimate [(No.2)] for fiscal year 2024/25 is directly related to

- additional expenditures associated with [the] Ministry of Education negotiated pay award salaries for fiscal year 2024/25;
- [the] Ministry of Public Works merger of Bermuda Land Development Company [BLDC]

and West End Development Corporation [WEDCO], which created the Bermuda Land Management Corporation [BLMC];

- quarry transport product recharges to the Ministry of National Security;
- [the Royal] Bermuda Regiment's negotiated pay award salaries for fiscal year 2024/25;
- Hurricane Ernesto embodiment;
- rent for Moresby House;
- Coast Guard maintenance;
- operational posts;
- police GEHI claims;
- recruitment activities;
- legal costs;
- customs;
- credit/debit card commissions;
- vehicle insurance;
- acting pay; [and]
- additional overtime required within [Bermuda] Police [Services], Department of Corrections, and Customs due to staff shortages.

Also, total capital account spending for fiscal year 2024/25 was \$101.7 million, or \$10.6 million, 9.5 per cent below the original budget of \$112.3 million. On the capital account, the total of \$3.4 million additional capital expenditures relate to ferry bow loading relocation, dangerous walls and rock cuts, and water sewage capital maintenance at the Tynes Bay Waste-to-Energy Facility.

In respect of capital expenditures, savings from existing capital projects has been identified. However, a technical supplementary is required to increase each overspent total authorised figure in 2024/25.

All the Members will recall that the criteria for determining debatable supplementary estimates requires all items on current accounts be debated if the total current account spend of a Ministry shows an increase of greater than 10 per cent or \$250,000 when compared to the original estimate. And all capital items are debatable. Applying the criteria I just described, all items on the current account and capital account are debatable, and I will therefore move the approval of the following items: current account [items] 1 through 3, which are all debatable; and capital account [items] 4 [and] 5, which are all debatable.

The Chairman: I thank the Honourable Minister of Finance for his presentation to this Honourable House.

There are five items in this supplementary estimate to be considered. I hereby call on the Minister in charge of item 1 to proceed, and I recognise the Honourable Junior Minister, MP Lister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 1, Head 17 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Junior Minister.

It has been moved that item 1, Head 17 be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 1, Head 17, is now taken under consideration.

Please proceed, [Junior] Minister.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

HEAD 17—DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to inform Members of this Honourable House of Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for the Department of Education, Head 17, for fiscal year 2024/25. The requested supplementary estimate is \$277,764. Honourable Members may recall that in March 2025 the Government announced salary increases for public officers across six union partners, representing seven bargaining units. The salary negotiation process resulted in agreements that recognise the valuable contributions of public officers and address salary pressures associated with the increased cost of living. The negotiated uplifts were finalised near the end of the 2024/25 fiscal year and included increases for members of the Bermuda Public Services Union, the Bermuda Industrial Union, and the Bermuda Union of Teachers.

While the salary uplifts applied to the 2024/25 fiscal year, the payments themselves were processed during fiscal year 2025/26. In accordance with the standard public accounting practises, these expenditures must be recorded in the fiscal year to which they apply, namely 2024/25. Accordingly, these funds were used to support salary uplifts for principals, teachers, counsellors, paraprofessionals, and other staff essential to the delivery of educational services and school operations across the public school system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any Members who wish to speak to item 1, Head 17?

There being none, [Junior] Minister, would you like to move the head for approval?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Chairman, I move that item 1, Head 17 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 1, Head 17 be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?

There being none; approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Education, Head 17, passed.]

The Chairman: I now call upon the Minister in charge of item 2 to proceed.

It is [the Ministry of] Public Works and Environment.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, with your indulgence, I ask that I be able to move items 2, 4, and 5, Heads 36, 82, 65, and 82 all at once.

The Chairman: Yes. So, it has been proposed by the Honourable Minister that we deal with item 2, Heads 36 [and] 82; item 4, Head 65; [and] item 5, Head 65 *[sic]* all at once.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, Minister, please proceed.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I think there is just a bit of a correction.

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. Jache Adams: [Under] item 5, I believe it is Head 82.

The Chairman: All right. On my sheet, it says [Head] 65, but you are correcting that to [Head] 82.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for the correction, Minister. Duly noted.

Any objection to that correction?

There being none, please proceed.

HEAD 36—MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as detailed in Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment seeks approval for supplementary provisions under current expenditure totalling \$7,568,181 and under capital expenditure totalling \$3,423,524. Mr. Chairman, as with my earlier presentation, I will address each department in turn, outlining first the current expenditure adjustments followed by the capital expenditure adjustments.

Mr. Chairman, I begin with the Ministry Headquarters, Head 36. Under current expenditure, two adjustments are required. The primary adjustment relates to the establishment of the Bermuda Land Management Corporation. Honourable Members will recall the merger of two government quangos, the West End Development Corporation [WEDCO] and the Bermuda Land Development Company [BLDC]. This supplementary arises from a \$4.7 million accounting adjustment associated with the Government's investment in BLDC. Previously, these shares were held by the

Minister of Public Works [and Environment]. Following the merger of the BLDC and WEDCO, the investment structure changed, and the shares were transferred to BLMC, the newly formed entity. This required a one-time accounting adjustment to reflect the revised ownership. While presented as an overrun, it is important to emphasise that this does not represent new expenditure but rather a technical accounting entry. Mr. Chairman, there are no capital supplements required under this head.

And so, I now turn to the Department of Marine and Ports. And if I beg your indulgence, I am speaking on behalf of the Minister responsible for Marine and Ports,—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: —as Public Works was responsible for the management of said project.

Mr. Chairman, there is one capital supplemental required for this department in the amount of \$15,668. This relates to the relocation of the Department of Marine and Ports' ferry maintenance facility to a centralised location in Dockyard, a project managed by the Department of Public Lands and Buildings. The adjustment reflects increases in material costs encountered during construction.

HEAD 82—WORKS AND ENGINEERING

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I now move to Head 82—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: —Works and Engineering.

Under current expenditure, a supplementary provision of \$2,868,181 is required to account for fuel supply, equipment, maintenance, and asphalt production. As outlined in my previous presentation, the government quarry maintains the majority of the Government's land-based vehicle fleet. While these assets are currently maintained, they are operated by various departments. At present, the Department [of Works and Engineering] does not consistently recover costs through a recharge mechanism for the maintenance services it provides to those user departments. The same applies to the production of asphalt. As a result, these costs are absorbed within the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, to be clear, this is not the result of any failure on the part of a government entity or individual. Rather, it reflects legacy practices in how operational costs have been recorded, alongside ongoing changes in accounting procedures. Importantly, this does not result in additional costs to Government overall. It is, in effect, a reallocation of operational expenses between departments at year-end.

Mr. Chairman, as noted previously, the Ministry continues to work closely with the Ministry of Finance to address this matter.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to capital expenditure. A supplemental provision of \$2,428,844 is requested for dangerous walls and rock cuts, and a supplemental provision of \$979,012 is requested for the Water and Sewage capital maintenance programme. Both of these are the result of an administrative oversight between the Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, which required an increase in the total allocated funding level, which has now been corrected.

To be clear, this is not new spend, rather, [it is due to] the TAF level not being increased appropriately during the 2024/25 fiscal budgetary process. Again, this has been corrected, as noted in the 2026/27 budget book.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any Members who wish to speak to items 2, 4, and 5?

There being none, Minister, would you like to move that item 2, Heads 36 and 82 be approved?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 2, Heads 36 and 82 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 2, Heads 36 and 82 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 2, Heads 36 and 82 are approved.

[Motion carried: Public Works and Engineering, Heads 36 and 82 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, item 4, [Head 65]?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 4, Head 65 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 4, Head 65 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 4, Head 65 is approved.

[Motion carried: Marine and Ports, Head 65 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, item 5, please.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 5, Head 82 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 5, Head 82, as corrected, be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There is no objection to that motion.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Works and Engineering, Head 82 passed.]

The Chairman: May I now call upon—

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: I am sorry. Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

May I call upon the Minister responsible for item 3, please? Minister of National Security, Minister Weeks.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: You have changed up the order on me.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I did.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45 be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45 are now taken under consideration.

Minister, you have the floor.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

HEAD 6—DEFENCE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The overspend for Head 6 [is] related to salaries, increases for salary uplifts that were awarded, Hurricane Ernesto embodiment, and retroactive pay. Also, Mr. Chairman, the overspend [is] related to rental costs for Moresby House, for the Coast Guard, and overspend related to additional Coast Guard costs for repairs, maintenance, fuel, and other expenses. The overtime related for the salary uplifts, Hurricane Ernesto, and retroactive pay was \$452,975. Overspend related to the rental costs was \$142,857, and the overspend related to additional Coast Guard costs for repairs, maintenance, fuel, and other expenses was \$155,734.

HEAD 7—BERMUDA POLICE SERVICE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Chairman, the explanation [of] overspends for Head 7 [are as follows]: The conditions of . . . To ensure that the premise of this article is met . . . And the article says, "All members of the

Bermuda Police Service shall be entitled, without payment, to such medical advice and treatment.” To ensure that the premise of this article is met, GEHI . . . Hang on, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: During the 2024/25 financial year, it was paid out in January 2025. The Bermuda Police Association received retroactive increases for the years 2022/23 (which was 2.25 per cent), and 2023/24 (which was also 2.25 per cent). These awards resulted in increased costs for overtime. According to the payroll register dated the 31st of January 2025, the BPS paid an additional \$449,000 in retroactive overtime. In addition, the overtime budget was underfunded by \$1,278,942.26. Therefore, the total overspend and overtime amounted to \$1,728,704.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes?

The Chairman: Yeah, I see that.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay. During the financial year, the BPS had several legal cases which resulted in an expenditure of \$1,241,224 against a budgeted amount of \$400,000. Thus, an overspend of \$841,224 was incurred. The overspend was attributable to expenditure as follows. Case A, legal costs were \$245,000. Case B, costs were \$65,000. Case C, costs were \$256,907.26. Case D, costs were \$100,000. And case E was \$475,000. Also, Mr. Chairman, during the year, the BPS was billed \$918,476 by GEHI, again related to the above noted recoverables. That expenditure resulted in an overspend of \$575,000.

So, during the financial year, the BPS engaged in extensive recruiting activities also, resulting in an expenditure of \$153,365 against a budget of \$24,400. The result was an overspend of \$128,965.

HEAD 12—CUSTOMS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Moving on to Head 12, Mr. Chairman, Customs [had an] overspend of \$546,745. The largest item in this, Mr. Chairman, is the [credit] card commission of \$339,000. Historically, Customs has not provided a budget for this expense line. It is not an expense that directly pertains to border control operations, but purely on the collection of revenue. So, it is extremely difficult to predict and in practise beyond the control of Customs. Given that this expense directly correlates with the amount of revenue collected, it creates the situation where the more successful Customs is at collecting revenue, the more fees are incurred.

Overtime was significantly underfunded for 2024/25. The overspend for the period was \$129,394. The other significant item for which we have not

historically provided a budget is acting pay, which totals \$68,000 for fiscal year 2024/25.

Moving on to . . .

The Chairman: Head 25.

HEAD 25—CORRECTIONS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —Head 25, Corrections. The overspend for Corrections in 2024/25 was all due to overtime expenditure. Overtime for the period was generated as a result of the same factors as was the previous year. During 2024/25, there were six inmates who were hospitalised. Their length of stay ranged from 2 to 27 days. Inmates who were placed on suicide observation required continuous one-on-one supervision, which generated unavoidable overtime. So, during this fiscal year, there were 11 inmates on suicide observation with each requiring two to seven days of continuous observation.

HEAD 45—BERMUDA FIRE SERVICE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Moving on, Mr. Chairman, to Head 45, again, Mr. Chairman, it comes down to overtime and staffing levels. And recruitment is ongoing—ongoing to try to get the requisite number of employees in the Fire Service. So that is my presentation for . . .

The Chairman: Thank you to Honourable Minister Michael Weeks, Minister of National Security, for his presentation on item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45.

Are there any Honourable Members who wish to speak to those heads?

Yes, I recognise Jarion Richardson, MP for constituency 23.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman. I almost promoted you there.

We . . . I . . . I want to speak to the Heads 7 and 25, and 45, and 12 as well. Along the item of overtime costs, the Honourable Minister has given a reasonable explanation as to what took place, [what] incurred those expenses. But I think one of the problems we have with supplementary estimates, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, is [that] it is a relatively dry topic, and it has . . . It is difficult to ascertain what the actual impact of these numbers are.

What I can tell you as a former uniformed serviceman is when I see overtime, I get worried because overtime means that we do not have enough people on the ground in Corrections, in fire [service], in EMT, in police. That means that you have tired uniformed officers. You have overworked uniformed officers. You have families broken up by overworked uniformed officers. You have missed family functions, and you have EMTs showing up who have just done so much overtime that it is very hard to keep going. So, what I am seeing right here is evidence not of a recruitment

deficiency or a lack of work planning but a lack of effectiveness.

Right now, although the Honourable Minister of Finance and Premier was able to speak to a budget surplus, he is dancing on overworked and extremely tired uniformed servicemen. And we have in the Opposition, a Member who was formerly of the Correction service as well. And I can tell you that showing up to a call after working your tush off is a bad idea, so much so that on a double-crewed car one night about 3:30 [am] on a certain road in Bermuda, there was a fight of some 50-odd people, and we got stuck in to save a lady, to get her out of that fight. And our backup consisted of a single-crewed car from St. George's who had just finished an overtime shift.

So, this budget line item is dry. This topic is dry. But I can assure it is extremely wet with the sweat and blood of the uniformed services. And so, this Minister, I encourage him to continue on these recruitment efforts. And the next time we have this conversation, I will be a lot less polite about my expectations.

The Chairman: Thank you, MP Richardson.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Is there any other Member who wishes to speak to item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45?

There being none, I call upon the Minister for item 3.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I take the comments of the Honourable Member from [constituency] 23 to heart, but the effort that the uniformed services is putting in for recruitment, I cannot say it enough, I mean, we are reaching out to the same pool of other uniformed services. You know, they are all in the same pool. We now are considering . . . As I have said in this House before, after we exhaust the pool of Bermudians, we are looking . . . we look to the spouse of Bermudians. We are looking to resident non-Bermudians. And then finally, we look overseas. So, trust me when I say that the uniformed services in every aspect are looking because they understand what you have explained as a former uniformed service member, that it does get tiring. It does cause burnout and the like. This recruitment thing is one of the priorities in all my uniformed services. And I, like you, hope that next year, if I am the one standing here, we talk a little less about the impact of overtime.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister Michael Weeks.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 3 and the heads they are under?

There being none, Minister, would you kindly move that your item and heads be approved?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Chairman, I now move that item 3, Head 6, which is Defence; Head 7, which is Police; [head] 12, Customs, [Head] 45, Fire; and [Head] 25, Corrections, be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25 and 45 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Ministry of National Security, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25 and 45 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister of Finance, I will not forget you this time.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I am all done?

The Chairman: You are done.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman. I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

It has been moved that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 be approved by the Committee and reported to the House as printed.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. Agreed to.

Oh—

[Timer chimes]

The Chairman: It is out of buzz.

[Motion carried: Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25 was considered by the Committee of Supply and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 4:25 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) 2024/25

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, Members. It has been reported to the House that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 be reported to the House as printed without objection . . . no objections, right?

An Hon. Member: No objections.

The Deputy Speaker: Right. So that is indeed approved.

I understand that for the Orders of the Day, these are the three items that were being considered.

So, I now move that we have the third reading.
Yes.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be read a third time by its title only.

Any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION
AMENDMENT ACT 2026**

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now move that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: It has now been moved that the said Bill be read by its title for a third time and passed.

Are there any objections?

There are none. The Bill is passed.

[Motion carried: The Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 was given a third reading and passed.]

The Deputy Speaker: I think that that is the only thing because those are supplementary estimates.

Premier, go ahead.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now move that this Honourable House do adjourn until the date of Friday, the 12th of June 2026 at 10:00 am.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the House do now recess until June 12, [at] 10:00 am.

Are there any persons who wish to speak to this motion?

Oh, I recognise the Member from constituency 23.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have the floor.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I intend to pick up where I left off, and I will speak to this topic until everyone is bored of it because the roads are still bad.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I am . . . I am . . . This Honourable House has to do something about it because, Madam Deputy Speaker, since we spoke about this last in this Honourable House, there have been three additional fatalities on the roads. And my understanding is a person passed away in the hospital from a road traffic accident in April. So, [that is] four fatalities since we last spoke in this House about the state of the roads. And this House is the place [from] where action must stem because it is clear that this issue stretches across our community and across our systems.

As we ferret and look for answers, we have fallen into the trap of oversimplification of a very tough and thorny issue. Whether we constantly are speaking to . . . We have education programmes where we are basically just asking people to obey the law now. We just come out right now and we [say], *Well, please follow the law*, I guess. So, all of the campaigns are strange. I saw [that] the chief inspector—the retired chief inspector—of roads policing said again that the traffic collisions are now up to 6 to 12 a day. So, I do not know if *please* and *thank you* is going to get this done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also noticed that we oversimplify the issue of why these road traffic accidents are happening. The going theory in the community seems to be that it is either speed or drink driving. And I will speak to the speed because last time we spoke about the speed cameras—and so much so that there was a point of order speaking to when these speed cameras will be deployed—[that] they are currently being tested, and when they are going to be deployed. But Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been talking about speed cameras since 2010 when the then Honourable Acting . . . the Honourable Deputy Premier, Dr. Ewart Brown, directed the then Public Safety Minister, Randy Horton.

An Hon. Member: That is wrong.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No.

An Hon. Member: The Premier—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

And that was as covered in *The Royal Gazette*. And I thank my colleagues for providing that information. So, we have now been going on about this for quite some time, and we still do not have the speed cameras. But I would submit that if it was so simple that it was just speed, then we should have been on top of this. I think it is more than that.

Let's talk about drunk driving, a part of our culture that is as unacceptable today as it has ever been. The simple fact of the matter is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is not unfamiliar for a lot of people to have more than a few drinks and take to the road. And our solution to that seems to be yet more of the same in terms of, *Please, stop doing it. I will thank you if you do.*

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the most absurd laws I have ever seen is one where we tell the drunk drivers where we are going to be when we arrest them. I just find that impractical and ridiculous. And I am sure that there is a very brilliant attorney somewhere in Bermuda who is going to explain to me why telling drunk drivers where we are is how we do it. But it is clear as day that we need to stop advertising our checkpoints. Our checkpoints are there to enforce the laws as they should be at that place in time that that checkpoint is established. It does us no good if all of us are just simply figuring out where the checkpoint is and then just going around it and continuing to flagrantly break the law.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also spoke last week to the ticketing system and how archaic it is, how long it takes, not only for the individual officer to issue the summons, but further for them to put it into the computer system and for it to reach the courts via the DPP [Department of Public Prosecutions]. As it stands right now, this is breaking the very basic principle of *justice delayed is justice denied*. The simple fact of the matter is we cannot have and cannot afford . . . We literally just spoke about overtime for our police officers. We literally just spoke about overtime for our uniformed services. So, we know they are overstretched, and yet what we give them is archaic solutions or archaic tools to fix a very modern problem. The fact of the matter is that they need to be able to issue these tickets very quickly and get the person before the courts.

But that takes me to my next point, Madam Deputy Speaker. Why are they going to court? If it is a low-level offence, our summons system currently requires them to attend Plea Court, and anyone who has been to Plea Court knows how long that takes and just how complicated that process is. The simple fact of the matter is that a simple speeding ticket should be effectively enforced as a matter of choice. You can elect to simply pay the fine and get it over with, thereby allowing

more police officers to be on the streets, more tickets to be issued, more people held accountable for the sub-par and dangerous, reckless driving we are seeing.

Madam [Deputy Speaker], I am speaking to an issue where again we saw four deaths in two weeks. This is way out of control. It is not even vaguely reasonable now. We do not have that much road. How are we having this situation?

And finally, Madam . . . or second point, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the coroner. We have already spoken about and are well aware that that process is under consultation. But the fact of the matter is, there is not enough of them, and we are not finding out why. We are not finding out why people are dying on these roads. That is key because how are we then going to develop the solutions to stop it from happening? Again, we go to the oversimplification. We [say], *Oh, that one must have been speed, or That one must have been drinking*. But we do not know, and no one knows. And so, the fact is that we cannot deploy our resources to actually stop the issue that is getting everyone killed. Again, [there have been] four fatalities.

And finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is an issue that can be dealt with by the Ministry of National Security, and I definitely encourage the Honourable Minister. And that is police statistics. If you look right now on the police website, you will see that that information is outdated as [all] get out. You will see that the strategic plan for the Bermuda Police Service is outdated. You will see that a number of the documents, public-facing documents to tell us what is happening with the Bermuda Police Service and how they are going to stop these issues from happening, are outdated. So, we are making oversimplified decisions. We are making uninformed decisions, and we are still losing more and more people all the time now.

[There are] four dead [in] two weeks. [The] time of talking is over. [The] time of decision-making and action is upon us. Otherwise, what on God's earth are we doing here, Madam Deputy Speaker?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I just gave you five solutions. I just gave you five—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I would love to answer that. I would love to. I have got five solutions. I just said them. I am happy to say them again, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: That's . . . You still have time left.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Sure, I will speak to—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I will speak to—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I will speak to . . .

The solutions are to

1. expedite the introduction of the speed cameras;
2. remove the publication of drunk stops, publicising drunk checkpoints;
3. remove the ticketing system that requires a lengthy summoning process to be got to court for the police service;
4. improve the court processing (again, another matter so that people can elect once having a ticket [to] simply to pay the fine, thereby reducing time on task and all the bureaucracy around that);
5. finish the coroner consultation as a matter of expediency so that we start learning the information that what is actually causing these fatalities; and the last one is
6. update all of the police statistics so we know what decisions are being made and what information is being used for that.

That is six solutions, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 11. Member, you have the floor.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot really fault the Member who just sat down because we all, none of us want to see our people dying on the roads, but to try to say the Government can solve it is not totally correct.

But anyway, moving on, Madam Deputy Speaker, I missed out condolences. So, I want to just give some condolences, please, if possible.

Mr. Elroy Eve—

The Deputy Speaker: It is motion to adjourn, and you can address any matter as long as you are not reflecting on a debate.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, no, [I am] not reflecting on any debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Heh, heh, heh.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Elroy Eve of Green Acres [Road], Devonshire. Ms. Janice Wright of . . . She lived in St. David's, but she is originally from Devonshire.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. [I] associate with Ms. Janice Wright.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: He is not doing condolences so he can—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Ms. Nelda Dyer of Spanish Point. But she was one of these persons during the dark days of 2012 to 2017 who was at every protest. Her grandson mentioned that in the church today. And Mr. Raymond Beach of Devonshire.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: [I will] associate everyone with that.

Also, I want to give birthday greetings to a friend of mine who aggrieved me by not telling me they had a birthday. Honourable Member from [constituency] 30 had a birthday a couple of days ago.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry. C . . . Was it? [Constituency] 30. Yes. So, you all can associate yourself with birthday greetings to the Honourable Member.

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey! Happy birthday!

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, often you hear something that you never heard before, and you say, *What does that mean? I never heard that word before.*

The Deputy Speaker: Which word is that?

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Oh, I forgot one thing. I want to congratulate my colleague over here for Arsenal finally winning the Cup and him finally becoming a father.

[Inaudible interjections]

GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Mr. Christopher Famous: So earlier today, I heard a word I heard on this side. Then I heard this side repeat it, so, I said, *Okay, it must be a real word because if they are both saying it, [it] must be a word.*

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Sounded like it.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I was wondering how to spell it because, you know, phonics and Ebonics, you know, something sounds, you know . . . Black people, they say things how they sound it, but that is not how it is spelled. Right? So, I said, let me look up that word. And the word was *contrarian*.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: First, I thought it was *c*, then it was *c-o-n-t*. Right? And then I had to look up the definition of *contrarian*. It is a noun. Contrarian (or contrarians, plural), a person who likes or tends to express contradictory viewpoints, especially from one held by a majority of people, usually because of non-conformity or spite—contrarians. So earlier today, we heard a lot of contrarian comments, right? So, I just want to address a few things. I do not know if this is reflecting on the debate, but I am speaking as, on behalf—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, talk to the Chair, don't . . . don't talk to him.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am speaking on behalf . . . as my . . . wearing my hat as the BHC [Bermuda Housing Corporation] chair, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Four years ago, the then Honourable Campbell, Member Campbell, became the Tourism Minister. There was a void left at BHC, and I became the chair. So, I have seen a lot of stuff over the last few years, most of all by seeing the list of Bermudians wanting, needing houses growing and growing.

So, we have put . . . Over the years, we have put a lot of things in train. We have looked at different methodologies of how to build houses, height, different places. You know, we have to think outside the box because to house a few thousand Bermudians, we cannot do it the same old way. So last year, when the Ministry of Housing [and Municipalities] was formed, a task group was put together comprising BHC, BLMC and the Ministry of Housing [and Municipalities], and some other ministries, the Ministry of [Youth, Social Development and] Seniors, [for] example. Right? So, for every Friday, we have met and gone over plans. We have researched things. We have been out to different vendors. And over the last few months, we finalised our plans, and in tandem, the Ministry of Housing [and Municipalities] has put together an affordable housing strategy.

So, I say that to say that earlier today, the Honourable Minister Zane De Silva made somewhat of an announcement, and I was expecting a lot of robust

questions on the technical parts of that announcement. That did not come about, but we [will] get to that in a minute.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, what I want to say to the people of Bermuda is that when persons say, *Oh, finally you are taking our advice*, I think that is a reach, because as I said, for four years I have been there. So, I know what we have gone through and how we have evolved. So, it smacks of sort of political opportunism for someone, anyone, to try to say, when we are doing something, *Oh, they are finally taking our advice*. Some things just make common sense. They are not saying that their advice was wrong. But to say that we are only doing it because of them, it is incorrect.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Especially when they had done nothing for five years.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: You all did nothing, so please be quiet.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Contrarians, once again.

The Deputy Speaker: Please.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: New word, huh?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have reached out to multiple vendors across the world, and we narrowed it down for the first two phases. We have narrowed it down to one vendor from Virginia [and] one vendor from Barbados. And within the next 18 months, because earlier [the] question was asked . . . *When will it be completed?* Well, we have these things called planning rules. [Does] anyone know about that?

Planning rules—we have to comply with planning rules. We do not get any breaks because we are Government. We have to comply with planning rules. We have to comply with health rules. We have to comply with fire and safety rules. Most of all, we have to comply with logic. We have to ensure that the ground that we are going to be building these on can sustain the weight if we have to put down piles. So, there is a phase that we are going to be going through. And when we start clearing ground, there will be people saying, *Why are you cutting on the Mexican Pepper trees?* [It is] because we want to house our people, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So roughly about \$120 million will be spent, guaranteed by the Government, loaned by local banks. And we will create over 200 units, some in your constituency that will house seniors, some in Southampton,

some way up in Dockyard. We are spreading it out. We are not concentrating it all in one area. But that is just the first phase.

In order to satisfy what we need for a growing population . . . Right? We have to grow our population, but we cannot do it without adequate housing. We are going to need to build more and spend more. And we can . . . when we bring these things to the House, it will be interesting to see the Opposition come with actual technical questions rather than little, small, little nitpicking sort of questions.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Right? Madam Deputy Speaker, I am wearing my BHC chair hat one more time here.

BHC has a staff of over 50 people, and they hire local contractors to do building renovations and maintenance. So, when I heard today someone attempt to make the claim that we do not have a proper maintenance programme, I am very aggrieved that someone would take that sort of tone to fellow Bermudians who are out there every day. That you get a call, *oh, this [broke] down*. Every week, every month, we get property maintenance reports. We spend hundreds, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on maintenance of BHC properties. So, I would implore those. Instead of just trying to make up a parliamentary question, ask the questions to the people who actually know.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Is this on?

The Deputy Speaker: It is on right now.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you. Thank you.

[Laughter]

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The . . . These . . . With the greatest respect to the Member, he is certainly imputing improper motive. My colleague's questions were quite thoughtful and quite properly put to the Minister in question, who unfortunately was not able to answer them nearly as well as this other Member. That perhaps is a question the Cabinet should discuss with that Minister—why he cannot answer the questions.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Continue.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to close with this. Every day that I go on Facebook or I get a call, there are people, our people (right? all of ours—people), dying to buy, to get a house to rent. The private sector someone alluded to, *Will we get subsidies to the private sector so they can build houses?* They are not building affordable houses, so why should we take taxpayer monies to give them to build unaffordable houses. Right? This Government . . . And in the future, if there is a change of Government, they must continue building for these people. When our people are going to be faced with \$2,000 for a studio apartment, that is what the going rate is right now, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I would . . . I would implore persons that . . . Yes, you want to score political points, but let's not do it with a subject that is very hurtful to people's [lives] because when we have to sit there and listen to the fact that we are, as a group, doing what we can to provide housing, and then we are going to hear these nitpicking sort of questions, almost accusatory, it is not . . . it is not good. So, I would implore this Government and maybe [the] future Government to just keep that in focus. Housing is as crucial as the topic that the other person spoke about, people dying on the roads.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 31.

**CANINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, RELEASE OF
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This weekend, or this week, there was a very unfortunate situation that happened at Penhurst Park with a woman walking three dogs. She was carrying one, walking two, and the dogs were attacked by loose German shepherds who then moved through the area and kind of traumatised other people as well. They have now been taken into custody, the dogs. These things, you know, they do happen, but every time they do, I think we have to, you know . . . Thank goodness that the situation is not worse than it already is.

But it has been over a year and a half, maybe close to two, since the Bermuda Canine Advisory Committee had finished, apparently, its report to update the regulations. And it was a year ago that my colleague, MP Robin Tucker, asked what the outcome of that had been. And at the time, we were told that it was being reviewed. We were also told that the Government had

put into place, or the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources had put into place an online dog register programme, which they hoped was going to bring forth more registrations. But that does not solve the problem.

The problem actually really needs to have a complete review of where we are with respect to enforcement; dog laws; compensation for people who get hurt; the definition of *prohibited breeds*, *restricted breeds*; fees; fines; and just basically the whole regulation. I know it is a difficult situation, but before somebody gets killed, it is really important that we get on top of that. And we would just like to see the discussion come forward. We would like to see the recommendations that the Canine Advisory Committee has put forward. And we would like to see just some priority given to this before somebody does get seriously hurt.

I know in my constituency, I hear from my constituents about concerns that they have about dogs roaming around the neighbourhood. Some, they say, are prohibited breeds and that nothing is being done about that. I do not know whether the relevance of that or not . . . But certainly . . .

And then my other question is, in the budget explanatory statements, it basically said that 25 per cent of the dogs are licenced, and that is about 25 per cent. So, 2,600 dogs is 25 per cent of the dogs that are registered, which means 75 per cent are not. But my question is, How do we know how many dogs are not registered if they are not registered and we do not have any data attached to them?

So, I think it is an important problem and an important issue. And I think the public deserves to see things come forward that will help protect them and a better understanding of what the situation is. What is going to be prohibited? What is going to be restricted? What does that mean? And when there are accidents like this or tragedies like this . . .

And [I] do recognise that when people see something like this or experience something like this on a walk in the park, it takes them many, many years, if ever, to get over [it]. It is a very traumatic situation. So, whatever we can do to help resolve that, I think we certainly need to get some better definition and really make looking at the recommendations and considering them a priority.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30. Member, you have the floor.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that.

And thank you to the Member for the birthday wishes. They are well-received.

Today, I rise on a very serious topic to me. And I want to preface my comments by saying . . . Because I know we have some educators in the room and I would like to thank the educators and former educators for their contribution to our society.

I would not be standing here in this Honourable House had it not been for the intervention of teachers in my life. I had to face the sting of being suspended. I had to face a lot of disciplinary actions in order to get me on the right track. Working—

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes.

Working with my mother and my family members, the teachers intervened in my life, and I was able to take a different path.

So, it is very disheartening for me to see that Bermuda Union of Teachers has expressed its lack of support for teachers and how they feel when conducting their duties and teaching and educating the future of our Island.

My big concern is that there has been a lack of discussion in this Honourable House when it comes to reassuring parents, when it comes to reassuring teachers and the public, that what has been printed is being remedied and giving constant updates on the situation that has developed within teaching.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So, point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: The Honourable Member, perhaps inadvertently, is misleading the House. The reason why this cannot be discussed in depth is because of privacy matters relating to a child and HR matters relating to the situation. So, these are matters that are being dealt with within the relevant areas. And that is why there has not been discussion about that.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

And let me just caution when it does come to HR matters and . . . like under disciplinary action; that is not for public debate. And it is not necessarily something that should come before our Chambers for consideration. That is certainly dealing with people in their private capacity, and so we need to be careful. And I understand the dismay that you may feel, but we have to be very cautious when talking about issues like that.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. And that is why I made sure not to reference any specific situation. I kept it to the comments made by the Bermuda Union of Teachers. And I am speaking in support of educators, not specifically towards any specific thing that may be still under investigation. But I appreciate the Member's intervention. It is good to keep make sure that we adhere to privacy.

We discussed in this Chamber, you know, housing and road fatalities and all manner of things that are plaguing Bermudians. And one of the main things that continues to come up on the doorstep is that everybody says, *Nobody cares. There is no respect. There is no this. There is no that.* And we continue to . . . I continue to hear that as I canvass, that people just do not care.

You know, when we talk about road fatalities, when we talk about crime, there is a lack of respect for consequences. And that is why I agree that obviously you cannot legislate your way out of poor behaviour. But what I will say is that we cannot as leaders send the wrong message to the community that we do not respect consequences, that we do not respect discipline when handed down by folks on the ground. And this is a general take of what we are apparently . . . well, teachers are experiencing, from their point of view. I am not going to say whether or not the . . . whatever investigation . . . or whatever is happening with a certain case. But from their point of view, they are coming to the community and asking for support. They are coming to the community and saying that their disciplinary abilities are being impeded, that there is a broad response across our education system to this particular issue.

And so, I rise today because had it not been for a teacher taking the time out to see something in me, I would not be standing here. And so, I feel I must pay that back and stand up and lend my support to teachers and what they deal with on the front line. They are having to be counsellors. They are having to be parents. They are having to be all manner of things before even getting to teaching and educating our children. And as a parent, that is concerning.

It concerns me that we may have a system where teachers do not feel comfortable to discipline children, that do not feel comfortable to conduct their daily duties with fear of an override or fear of something coming down from above them. And [there is] even mention [of] people and parents and students going around the principals and teachers to the Ministry. And I feel that this is totally unacceptable. It is just not how it should be done.

You must empower the folks who are on the ground dealing with the children 24-7 and dealing with the students 24-7. If not, what you run the risk of is removing the fear of consequence. I think most in this Chamber come from a generation where consequences were dealt out a lot more harshly and a lot more frequently than they are today. So—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I just want to caution us because I do not want to get emotional, but it is such a difference that can be made in a student's life when they experience well-placed discipline and consequences for their actions. There can be [monumental] change in a person's trajectory when they begin to care about oneself, their future, and believe that there are prospects for them in the future. We cannot rob students of that lesson, that life and your actions come with consequences.

We cannot allow what we already see where folks get behind the wheel and do not have a lot of regard for what consequences may happen by drinking and driving or the fact that we have people able to pick up weapons and harm one another who they could not be related to on such a small island because of lack of fear of consequence and the feeling of having very little prospect within their future and care for oneself. And that starts at a young age.

So, why I am rising here today is to call on a universal rule to be followed that regardless—take the One Bermuda Alliance out of it, take the PLP out of it—a universal rule that must be followed is that we must support our teachers. We must support the early intervention of our students.

And this is not to say that teachers do not deserve scrutiny, and that teachers do not deserve to also be held accountable to whatever job they are providing. But at the end of the day, this is our future. These students are going to be the next us. They are going to take over leadership. We cannot allow our society to shy away from correcting poor behaviour or giving people consequences for doing something that is wrong. We cannot give people a way out to get around suffering for the things that they have done because that defies a fundamental truth of life. When you go into the workplace, when you enter the public domain, you must have understanding that your actions can have consequences.

And so, I understand that it is a very touchy issue and I do not want to cast aspersions one way or the other. But it is undeniable that our teachers, our students and parents are feeling very shaken by the fallout of what is happening throughout our system, where we are having potential demonstrations and various things.

So I just want to please call upon the Government and the Opposition (I will not even make it partisan) that we all try our best to ensure that we support discipline, rule of law and consequences for action, and that we stand up and say that we support teachers, and that they have our support to do their job to the best of their ability. But also allow them to know that should they need to be held to account, yes, we will do that too. Because consequences go both ways. But in this situation, we cannot, as a developed country, have our union speaking into the press, saying they are not being heard, saying that they are not being listened to,

that they are not being supported, and expect to just go about our day, with silence from that particular Minister. And so—

The Deputy Speaker: So, so here, we are not going to make things personal.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Because there are rules and regulations that govern how things get done, and legal measures that must be considered in the carrying out of our duties. And so, I would just say, when you say *with that particular Minister*, now you are personalising everything and I am not going to accept that. Especially when even Ministers (and some of your colleagues can tell you) have rules and regulations that they must abide, as well.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. And I will retract that. I will take leave of your ruling there.

So, I will finish with this. I could have been in a totally different situation. I could have been a totally different person, you know. I had anger issues, and things that I was dealing with, that teachers took the time to work with me on. They took the time to work through those things with me. And I am honoured to have had those levels of educators in my life, who were supported by my mother when I needed to be disciplined. And it was carried out in a way that changed my life.

And I want that for all students, because sometimes love can be tough, and sometimes you need tough love, right? And it is not always about being sweet. Sometimes I have to draw a line with you, draw a boundary with you. And so, I support our teachers. I hope that the situation within our education system is remedied and tackled and that they feel supported in doing their daily duties.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: You're welcome.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 33. Member, you have the floor.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am not going to spend much time on this because it is a very, very difficult issue. But I think one thing I think we must reinforce: under the Education Act there are rules governing the operation of the Minister, and particularly of being holding those below accountable. So, on the one hand, you cannot say, *discipline, discipline, discipline*. On the other hand, you cannot say there must be oversight. And I understand what the

Member was trying to do. But this is a difficult situation. It is a difficult situation to thread the needle on, because it involves a child and an HR matter. And so, until that matter is resolved, we all will have to reserve judgment to a certain extent.

And I do think that, you know, in all relationships with all our unions, we are a labour party. My grandfather was a president of Bermuda Union of Teachers. So, the connection with labour, however it strains, it must be strengthened, restored and the lines of communication is done. So, there is no argument there.

ELEVATING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE TO FOCUS ON ATTACKING THE PROBLEMS, RATHER THAN ATTACKING EACH OTHER

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: But I did not rise, specifically, to speak on that, but I want to speak a little bit about how the Westminster system is, and our way we choose to perform within it is hindering our progress.

Because the nature of the Westminster system is, us versus them. For those of us who served in the previous Chamber, some of the grey hairs here, the distance between the Government and Opposition is the measurement of two swords. You are placed in confrontation with each other, to face each other. The nature of the Westminster system encourages Oppositions—past, present and, perhaps, future—to hope for Government failures, to spring on Government failures, to exploit Government failures. And it necessitates the attacking of people instead of attacking of problems.

And so, we have an environment where the problems become murky because of the nature of the way that we have been taught by our colonisers to approach these problems. And so, I know we are going to be talking about constitutional reform at some point, and I will not anticipate that discussion or debate. But part of it definitely should be looking at how we can Bermudianise our structure, to minimise the cultural conflicts that are inherent in the one we have inherited from our colonisers. And I have witnessed it on many, many occasions, where issues that should be united, and we should be trying to tackle the root causes of, become points of exploitation. And I will not point fingers at anybody in particular. We have all who have served in Opposition know what we mean.

But there is a new wave and a new thought across the world, that the old ways of doing politics are not working. You are seeing Oppositions around the world being rejected for not being able to present themselves as better than those they seek to replace. And so there comes a point where we have to actually know—and, you know, and let us be clear, this culture of conflict does not just stop here. It continues on to the community. Because we all know the listenership goes up when we are fighting. We know that if one of us goes up here and throws a better stick about, you walk around a community, people are like, Yes, *hit 'em, keep*

hitting 'em. And we, when it comes to education, when it comes to shooting, when it comes to deaths on our road, when it comes to all of these issues, housing, we are still locked into attacking the people, the personalities, the organisations. We are not attacking the problem.

And I am not one of those people who says, *Oh, you know well the way we carry on here, it affects people's behaviour.* I am a son of a politician. I have two sons. And I can assure you, there ain't too many people in this country looking [to] us as an example on how to conduct themselves anyway. But let us be clear. As we go forward, there are people who are a little bit less interested in hearing criticisms for criticism's sake. They are less interested in hearing attack for attack's sake. They are less interested in the abuse of a system that we inherited. And we really should figure out how we can work around it.

So, there are lots of ways we can approach this. But I think that as we approach towards the constitutional reform, I will hope the Members will collectively start looking at this system that we have inherited and bring forward ideas into how we can improve it to make it more collaborative as a culture, because the structure is not. It is not inherent to what we are as a people. And it enables and encourages and promotes unnecessary division, where there should be greater collaboration. And as I said, I have been a Minister, so I know. I have not always collaborated as much as I should have. I have not always listened as much as I should have. But I have also had Members (who no longer in this Chamber, were sent the exit) who we met with and we told them the facts, and they came to Parliament and act like they did not know what we were talking about. We had people who came, and did not read the Bills, and attacked on points that the Bill was not even trying to make.

And so there is no Government, nobody in this Chamber, is immune from criticism, legitimate criticism. None of us should be willing to throw out any good ideas from a good place. But what we must do is elevate the debate, and focus more on attacking the problems, than looking for ways to attack each other.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: And before I ask if anybody else wishes to speak, it [would be] remiss of me to not recognise Senator Mischa Fubler sitting in the Gallery.

Welcome, Senator.

[Desk thumping]

[Motion to adjourn, continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 7. Member, you have the floor.

FOUNDATION OF OUR CULTURE—RESPECT

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to centre my comments today, I guess, following on from my colleague, MP Robinson. Part of who we are—I mean, we have just come off of the Bermuda Day holiday. We have talked, you know, there has been a lot about culture, and part of our culture and things. And one of the things that, for me, is hugely important to remember is that for people who are my age, 60, and those who are, I guess, not too far behind (or should say forward, a little younger), will have been brought up in a certain culture in Bermuda. There were certain expectations. There was a certain level of respect. There was a respect for elders, for self, for teachers and the like. And somehow, at some point, some of those, some of that respect has dwindled.

So, when we look at—or at least when I look at—some of the things that are happening within our community, and we keep asking, *Well, why are we here? How is this happening? Why are we seeing this type of disrespect? Why are people fighting?* And why the young people in particular (not just young people, I want to add)? But we have lost a lot of respect that we had for each other and for ourselves.

So, what I would like to do with my few minutes is just to take a few minutes to remind ourselves about what is at the foundation of our culture; and that is respect. And, I do not know, I mean, I have had my fair share of being kicked out of classes in high school. And I am sure that there are other people in this room who have. I have also had my fair share of entering rooms as a child, and adults have been in there. And my granny or whoever else would look at me like, there is definitely, you have lost yourself because you have not opened your mouth and said, *good afternoon, good evening, good night, auntie, uncle, mister, missus.* There is something very important about that.

And I want to take this opportunity to remind us of where we have come from, because sometimes I look and I do not recognise where we are. We take on a lot of things from other places, and I think that we discount, in a lot of ways, who we actually are as fundamentally Bermudian. That might seem to be the greetings, and, you know, standing up on the bus when an adult gets on the bus, and all those types of things. Not talking back in the classroom. Seem to be, on the face of it, to some, might be small things, but they feed into the very thing that MP Robinson talked about, and that is accountability. We have to be able to build resilience and restore accountability in our children, and in

ourselves, but it has to start with us. We cannot hold children, and each other, to a standard that we are not prepared to hold ourselves to.

Once upon a time, if we were doing something—because we often use this overused phrase about the village. We used to be a real village. We used to look out for each other. If somebody was doing something, I mean, I have a memory of doing something, and before there were cell phones and all that type of stuff, and Lord knows I am not trying to go back in the day. I am just trying to remind us of the principles that we all would have grown up on. Once upon a time, something, we would have done something, said something, that we ought not to have said, treated somebody in a way we ought not to have. And before there were cell phones, mama, granny, grandpa, whoever knew long before we got home what happened. And we had to give an account for what we did, or go back and apologise, or make it right.

What we need to do in this country, in my opinion, is to remember where we have come from. We have to remember those principles that were instilled in us because, yes, we want to advance. Yes, we want to do things differently. We want to go with the times and whatnot, and that is all good. We have to continue to evolve as people. But what we also have to do is remember the principles that got us here in the first place, because some of those things are timeless. If we maintained accountability with each other, then when our children are going wrong, then it would be a lot easier for us to be able to say, *Johnny, you know your mama would not want you to do that*. And if mama was keeping accountability on Johnny, Johnny would not be disrespectful to Miss Smith, who is just trying to look out for him, so that he is able to grow up in an environment where he is not going to end up doing a whole lot of crazy stuff. Every child that I know tries to do crazy stuff, but the children that I (and me included), who have grown up with those guardrails, we went so far, but we knew that we could not go any further.

I believe, as Bermudians, we are not too far gone. But we will be over that cliff if we do not pull some of these things back now. And we often talk about the accountability, we talk about, we need to legislate (and we do). We talk about, yes, we are going to get the Parental Responsibility Act, which is, you know, when it comes, it is probably going to be, you know, useful. But what we do not talk about is what is happening at home. Nobody wants to talk about that. Because the issue . . . at the core of the issue, for most of the issues that we have, is starting from our houses. And we have to stop acting like it is not. We keep talking . . . we sometimes, we act like it is everybody else. It is the school, it is the teachers, it is the police, it is the this, it is the that, it is the other. No.

Let us start talking about, parents, what are you doing? Guardians, what are you doing? Because some of us are holding anger that we take out on our children, and our children respond, and then we are wondering

what is going on. We see that there are sometimes things that are happening with us. We have our own generational traumas. Every last person in this room, listening in this Island, has had some trauma along the way. We have to talk about it, and face it, and deal with it because our next generations depend on it. We have allowed this mess that is happening right now, and we only have ourselves to hold accountable for it.

So, we are not too far gone. We can fix it if we have an appetite to fix it. But we have to start calling it what it is. This stuff that we are seeing, is happening, it is stemming from our households, and it is stemming from our lack of engagement, and doing, and carrying forward, those very principles that I talked about earlier. We are at a crisis point right now. We are seeing all the things that we all know about. We are seeing murders, we are seeing fights, we are seeing people stealing stuff. How in the world can you, can someone . . . I saw a clip, this was a while ago, of an issue that had happened, and somebody had a fight because, or was fighting to try to keep their chain because somebody wanted to . . . How in the world could you have adults, a grown man, sitting around looking and watching and not saying a word? How, Madam Deputy Speaker? And then, what we will do, is we will go over on the side, we will go to our parties, and our picnics, and all that kind of stuff, and then what we will do is say, *Oh, let me show you the video*. And you were sitting right there and did not even intervene.

I saw the video of the little girl who was on the bus, and she was having a meltdown for whatever reason. Some adult was taunting her, children in the back taunting her and laughing, and adults were on the bus, and nobody had the decency to help that little girl and say something. The bus driver did not say anything (from the clip I saw, I will add that, I did not see—the clip I saw), that adults on that bus did not say a word. That is part of our issue, Madam Deputy Speaker. At one point, we all used to get involved.

I still do. And my husband has told me before, because I do not let no children walk by me and do not open their mouth when they are walking past my house. And he has told me that one of these days one of these children is going to cuss you out. And I am good with that because I will deal with that too. It may not be in that moment, but I will deal with that eventually if they are disrespectful. Because I am not about to . . . I am going to do my part. I do not allow it in my house with my children, my grandchildren, the whole nine. My children grew up with a look . . . and guess what? Today, they are responsible adults, and they are raising responsible children.

So, it happens everywhere, but it will, the bad stuff will continue to happen, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we do not get off our behinds and get involved. If we do not start to say, look, I am going to check me. What am I doing? There are tonnes of resources available. The Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors are doing a lot of work to make things available to

people, but you got to go get it. But first, you got to want it. But you cannot want it, and then keep saying why this is happening, and why that is happening, and you are not even having the courtesy and the care to be able to correct young people when you see them, when you see them going wrong. We have a responsibility.

We talk about culture. That is part of our culture. And it is part of our culture that we cannot afford to lose because, already, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am already turning around, and I am sure that some of you will be looking around too, and saying, *This is not the Bermuda I grew up in*, and it is not. It can be better, but we have to each, individually, do our part to make sure that we can make it better for the future generations. If we are talking about young people taking over, I, honestly, with some of the young people—there are some, let me just qualify, there are some young people who are doing some amazing work, who are doing some amazing things in this country. But it seems as though there is a pocket that is not.

So let us go get them. Let us fix it. We are 22 miles and, arguably, 60,000 people. We are a small town on a world stage. It is no reason why we cannot fix some of these issues that we are dealing with, especially in circumstances where we have already had a model. But we have to take our blinders off and be willing to face ourselves. Let us, it is like taking off all your clothes and standing in the mirror and say, *I love what I see*. If we are talking about how much we love each other, we talk about how, you know, *I have got you*, all this other kind of stuff. If I have got you, I am going to say the things that sometimes is going to be hard for you to understand, hard for you to accept, rather, is what I meant. But I say it because I care about you, and I want you to be able to do better. We have to be able to make our . . . to make some adjustments. Our families, our parents, our guardians, us.

If you have an influence on a child, if you have an influence on an adult, do not support the bad behaviour. And worst of all, do not ignore the bad behaviour. Address it. Address it, speak up, let people know it is inappropriate for you to do this, that, and the other. It is inappropriate for you to see somebody that you know, that has got mental health challenges, and you talk about them and you laugh, and all that kind of crazy stuff. Let us start being the adults in the room. Let us start taking accountability for our households, our families. Some of our families, Madam Deputy Speaker, are sick. Some of us are carrying stuff that we ought not be carrying, but we will continue to carry them unless we get help for it.

So, I will end with this. My prayer, my hope, I am begging people: if, please stop telling me, every time I talk to somebody about something that is happening in the country that is bad, and I hear and I read comments sometimes, and, *Oh, it is sad, it is sad*. Yes, it is sad. But what we are we going to do about it? It is an overused word. We have within our ability to be able to do something about it. So, I pray, I pray, I pray, I pray

and I beg that we start to do something. How do you do? First of all, look in the mirror. Then look at those who are in your circle of influence. Leave your circle of concern outside. Deal with your circle of influence. Who do you have influence on? And then start there.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise Member from constituency 2. Member, you have the floor.

BERMUDA DAY, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, thank you, Madam. Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Home Affairs Minister came to St. George's recently dressed in red, with good intentions. She was in the west and I did not ask her what colour did she wear there. But I certainly hope it was blue and blue.

An Hon. Member: She was clearly at war.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I appreciated the fact that she has had town hall meetings to discuss, and cause discussion to take place about CARICOM. I have listened to comments made, and the like. And I think in a more sober way, the conversation needs to continue. It needs to continue for another 200 years, not without us doing things to be closer, like we are going to do, to the Caribbean, but recognising for as long as we have been here, we have been disconnected.

I asked a question of the Minister on this subject, and there was something absent when the Minister came to St. George's. I believe a lot of people are drawing, trying to draw the Government into an intellectual conversation about CARICOM.

I witnessed Bermuda Day, the last few Bermuda days, as one participating in the parade. Unable to see, this year, all of those who participate in the parade, because that sun sort of wore me out a little bit. But I was able to see a Bermuda from a different lens because I was not dancing. I was sitting, observing, acknowledging, appreciating and drinking a little bit of water (and maybe a libation or two) as you paraded through.

I saw Bermuda families. I saw Andersons on Front Street. I saw Andersons from St. George's near the flagpole. One would see Andersons from White Hill, or further along Front Street. One would see Lambs and Foggos up on Court Street. One would see Gilberts across the street. One would see Ascentos sitting in different places on Cedar Avenue. One would see visitors in great numbers, and dispersed, sitting in restaurants. You would see persons enthralled in Bermuda. One

would see Gombey troupes of differing colours, different from what it was in the early 1980s when the Bermuda Day celebration replaced the Easter parade, which had its racial connotations attached to it, and the very staunch and real connections to a colonial bygone era, that in some ways still lingers on.

I say that in the context that, it is easy for us to always see the glass as half empty, but my training in life, and my station in life, and as a coach of people, I have been trained in my profession to appreciate the importance of knowing a glass as half full. And knowing that if you dwell in the land of negativity, it is as contagious as the cold. If you dwell in the land of trying to figure out what is wrong, it will prevent you from growing what needs to be done in doing it right.

I am one who teaches fundamentals. I appreciate that doing things fundamentally means that you need to repeat simple, correct things repeatedly. So, whether or not it be in education, whether or not it be delving in the area of restoration of some of the minds that might be going astray in Bermuda, it is in getting back to some fundamental things. It would be easy for us to keep finding the flavour of the month each week, or every two weeks, when we come and harping on them. But as I went through that parade, I saw what makes me hopeful and what makes me appreciative of Bermuda Day.

I remember Bermuda Day. The Minister had the opportunity of cancelling on Bermuda Day not too long ago. And since my years of being connected to politics, since 1983 when I first ran, and the years of being in Youth Parliament, I would say very confidently that every Minister who would have served, going back to Lenny Swan in the 1970s, going back to all the Ministers, would have made the call and that year Bermuda Day would have been cancelled. But a young Minister? Doing his first, probably, year as a Minister and what he says is the most important holiday for him. I would say that it is probably the second best, because I listened to him the other day talk of how Cleveland's winning is more important to him than anything else, so I know that is more important.

But I say this, tongue-in-cheek, but I say this, that the reason why that holiday is so important to that young Minister: he probably was very light when the decision was made to have a Bermuda Day in the first place. He is a teacher by trade, and a historian, so he would appreciate the reasons why. But he, like another Minister, who I passed along the trail, have families that have sat in the same places every year.

Families. You know the heartbeat of a community, the heartbeat of culture, is families.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is the key, common denominator. You know, when someone says, *Who is your people?* I tell them, my grandfather was John

Anderson. They said, *The John Anderson from Hog Bay Level?* I said, *No, the John Anderson from Salt Kettle.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Oh yes. Our families occupy Tucker's Town, occupy where the Princess is today, occupy places where folks were displaced. My family! And not too dissimilar from many families. So, when you hear the Minister talk about families who are of Bermuda origin, who are of high economic pedigree, from ages with generational wealth, those families will have found it easy to be in The Bahamas, in Turks and Caicos, in places in the Caribbean, Bermudians would not find it so easy because our mind-set was taught to us to hate each other. If you are really looking for why you got a lot of Black on Black crime, you need to go back to the origins of how, you know, people in Bermuda were taught to look down on our very cousins in Saint Kitts, and in the islands. And you all know it to be true.

I am blessed to have been brought up in a sport like golf, that took me around the world and put me in places like Jamaica. I just want to say happy 80th birthday to Bev Russell, my family in Jamaica, entrepreneurs down there. Had the honour of being with them recently. Our connections are so significant, and they are not so dissimilar to those of my families from the United Kingdom, or my adopted families of the Azores. Because I tell people, I have said this to the Minister responsible for Home Affairs, as well. What we must do in the Caribbean for CARICOM, we must also do with the Azores, for my Azorean cousins.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Those connections I have seen with the Azores flight, and how Bermudians are discovering similarities and opportunities in a land that they do not . . . that they cannot afford. Even persons who own homes in Bermuda, who are land rich and cash poor. We need to explore the opportunities of a kindred spirit. You know, not too long ago, I celebrated the growth I have seen in Freemasonry in Bermuda, with the Peppercorn Ceremony, the cultural connections.

I speak of it because I know it; I have been involved in it. I have been ridiculed for being so, but because so I am low enough to appreciate when I see good things cultivate from times, and people look down on you for standing out. I know what it is like to walk places all alone as a Black man, all alone, one in 150, and not want to be 20th. Aspiring to be number one and done so in the least likely of places. I say that to say this, that as you see the Peppercorn Ceremony become a tourism cultural thing that we can build upon, as I have seen Bermuda Day grow because a Minister loves that part of culture, because he has been brought

up in it. I see growth in our country, and I am encouraging the Opposition today, as one who has been a trained person in Opposition, trained, studied the best Opposition in the world, the PLP.

Yes, I did. So, it is only fitting that I feel very comfortable where I sit. Because I respected L. Frederick Wade. I respected C. Eugene Cox. I respected, and she was my good friend, Dame Lois Browne-Evans. So much so, that as Opposition Leader, I sat in her house when I had a problem with a school, and the way they were treating—just when the Ombudsman's Office just came into being—and she told me a story about when her child went to Mount Saint Agnes, and how they treated her because her godmother was Dr. Barbara Ball. And she said to me, she says, *That situation's not too similar. Let me show you how I had to deal with it. You know, my husband had one of his [children] come up in Catholicism*, like my wife, and the like. So, you know, these things are not too dissimilar.

I am saying that to say that it is easy, as my good friend Maxwell says, you know, *It is easy to tickle them up but sometimes you have to be responsible*. Sometimes, you just have to have the courage enough to tell even your supporters that that does not serve the better interest of this country. Sometimes you have to look at persons who you know, when it comes to their best interest, would make the total opposite decision that they are pushing you towards, based on maybe a dollar and a cent.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I have lived long enough, and lived in Europe . . . and lived in Europe and plied my trade. Been escorted at gunpoint out of Faro Airport back to London, and driven to the Portuguese embassy, as a 22-year-old, to know that Britain was once part of the European Union. And a vote during, that my daughter participated in, took Britain away, and took them right back. I have seen in Britain today where the national party that is growing, rise, is very xenophobic. I would not want that for my country either . . . I would not want that for my country. Not by what I saw in Bermuda Day Parade. I was very proud to be Bermudian.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And let me say this, right? One of the reasons why I keep reminding folk, right, that on the Burrows-Hall side, my families were all Higginbothams. Higginbothams from St. George's. Okay? And they were not Black. My family were Burrows' from Sinky Bay . . . not Sinky Bay. Over the other side of the bay, Jew's Bay, where my Granny had a house on the hill where they compulsorily acquired.

My grandfather was an Anderson from Salt Kettle, John Anderson. Father, Peter Herbert Anderson, the same offspring is sitting right in front of me. They are the Jache Adams and many others. Okay?

My great-grandmother was Harriet "Babes" Ratteray, the granddaughter of Charles Roach Ratteray. The granddaughter was my great grandmother. I am here to say, right, that we need to leverage our natural relationships, especially in family, in order to be able to understand why our families are fighting amongst ourselves.

You think if Britain really cared about us, they would have had a national commission on what is going on, and all this killing of our own people. They are too worried about themselves right now. They cannot get the . . . they cannot decide why not they want to help Ukraine, or what they are going to do in the Middle East. They cannot figure out why they are not with Europe, or how long they are going to stay by themselves. Listen, one thing we have been since the 1600s is able to figure out what is best in the interest of Bermuda. Right? And I feel, having watched that Bermuda Day Parade, loving the fact that the new generation of Bermudians—because we all came from somewhere. The Filipino community, not deterred, the fact that they are going to celebrate their culture, and embrace ours at the same time. And one thing I will say about them, they study the community they are in, and they are respectful towards us. *Mr. Swan, how are you?* and the like.

And we need to (and I know the Minister responsible for Labour encourages this type of thing) educating people that come from overseas about Bermuda and Bermuda's culture. We need to do more of that too, as we repatriate some Bermudians. It has come to the fact now that I know Bermudian students, like my daughter and her friends that went to Saltus and the like, some of them are doctors over in the UK, and she is still working on her designation, taking her exams, her solicitor's exams and the like. They get together and fly kites, and other Bermudians around the world do that. That is part of who we are.

People love Bermuda. As we sell Bermuda, I am encouraging us. I am encouraging us to leverage Bermudians overseas to help sell Bermuda. Take some of that money. None of this necessarily has to go to the telegraph. It evaporates once it is gone in print. You can invest in Bermudians around the world: in Canada, in the United States, in the Caribbean, in the Azores, in England, in Wales, in Scotland, in Ireland, in Italy. Where we have connections with people and do things.

Finally, as I wrap up, let me just say this. I want to commend the Culture Department, the Minister, and also the director for the work that they have done. But as I mentioned on congrats, I want to say thank you to those forefathers, like Ms. Ruth Thomas, that made it possible for us to have people feel it necessary to ride their classical bikes throughout Bermuda. For the day now that the Lorraine [Nursing] Home would put their seniors to make sure that they can see what is going on and enjoy. Project Action for making sure that we took the time to honour someone that no one realised helped us behind the scenes, Ceola Wilson. St. David's Island, those, and native community for being there.

CedarBridge Academy, Mr. Dean Foggo, for what they were able to do with their float. Somebody said to me, says, *Do you think we need to bring back the Easter Parade?* I says, no, we can have a category to encourage more floral fashions. But, you know, maybe we will find some more flowers, but maybe we can encourage some folks to do some more creative things.

But the beautiful part about Bermuda Day was that it galvanised families. You hear people would make fun about somebody putting a tape down to be to be somewhere. You know, [it] beckons to me of why my family always had Cup Match at Cathedral Rocks. There was a time when places where people go to swim was not so restrictive as it is today. As you as you drive, fly in, you will see Bermuda dotted with white roofs. Let us protect the open spaces that we have left, to make sure that all Bermudians and our visitors can enjoy this beautiful Island, and some of its beauty, for decades to come.

But let us not forget how important it is. We will never get back the 200 to 300 years lost, of not being connected with our community. But we can certainly go forward with our Caribbean, Azorean and the rest of the world that connected to Bermuda in a more meaningful way. It is time for this whole country and leadership to get on board with that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25. Member, you have the floor.

INSURANCE, REGULATING LOCAL INSURANCE COMPANIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and a pleasant early evening to you.

I have got two topics I want to cover today. The first is insurance. We have recently heard that the local company Allshores is going to receive a \$21 million tax credit paid for from the taxpayers' money. Now, I understand why this has to happen. I understand this complicated situation relating to the OECD, and the CIT, and the ABCs, and the "you know me's." I am not even talking about that. The Government obviously understands that situation.

The Government could have easily foreseen this situation happening—and should have, because it was well foreseen—and put in place mechanisms to make sure the people of Bermuda, who are paying ever-increasing insurance premiums, receive the benefits of those tax credits. In the way that those who pay BELCO bills—because BELCO is going to get a tax credit—will receive the benefits of those tax credits, because of the way the BELCO rates are regulated by the Regulatory Authority. So, I am going to give a free idea here to the Government, which we brought up in our

Reply to the Budget [Statement], is that the local insurers should be regulated.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, we in the OBA are not big fans of regulation and red tape, but there are circumstances when it is appropriate. Allshores, big company, market dominance. A major cost for a lot of Bermudians receiving millions of dollars of taxpayer money and, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is common in many jurisdictions that insurers, for personal lives (that means, you know, you and me, paying our house insurance, car insurance, what have you) are regulated. They cannot just change their premiums whenever they feel like it. They have to apply to the regulator, and the regulator will look at it and say, *Is this fair? Is it reasonable? Are all the appropriate things taken into account for?*

So, we are going to give this idea, in a spirit of constructive collaboration, to the Government. And I hope that the Premier and Minister of Finance, I hope that the Minister of Health, and I hope that the Minister for Home Affairs can get their heads together and figure out how to take some action on this. So that this frankly ridiculous situation can be resolved for the people of Bermuda.

So let me put that there. I have talked about that in public, but I want to get that on the record here because it is important. And it may not be simple, but it has to be done.

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019 MISSING ANNUAL REPORTS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know, we recently had a visit from King Charles. I do not remember which one he is, second or third. And I think Bermuda showed itself very well. I think he had a great visit here. He went around, he met a lot of children, artists, sportspersons. I think that was very appropriate. And by all accounts, he was served well by his visit, and so were we. And he came here right after he went to the United States. And by all accounts, that visit went very well for him. And he made what was a well-reported speech to the US Congress there. And if you do not mind, may I quote a few phrases from the speech, Madam Deputy Speaker?

He was referring to the Magna Carta, and he was talking about it, how it is a sort of shared document that underlies the United Kingdom's political and constitutional system, and how many aspects of America, the United States of America system, have also sprung from that well. And indeed, obviously, us here in Bermuda.

So, as he said, the Magna Carta is "the foundation of the principle that executive power is subject to checks and balances." And then he went on to say, "Our common ideals were not only crucial for liberty and equality, they are also the foundation of our shared prosperity. The rule of law: the certainty of stable and

accessible rules, an independent judiciary resolving disputes and delivering impartial justice. These features created the conditions for centuries of unmatched economic growth in our two countries.”

And Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the values of Bermuda as a jurisdiction for business, but also for people to come and visit, is in fact things like our rule of law, the safety, people can feel confident that they understand how things will go, things like that. So, I want to keep talking about the rule of law. We had today tabled by the Premier, the 2025, . . . 2024, . . . 2025/26 Premier staff reports. I am not even going say I am grateful to him, because it is required by law, so he produced them. And we were discussing the supplementals, and one of the things that came up is—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: The Premier and Minister of Finance does not produce these reports. These reports are produced by the public service. I table them as a representative. I know the Honourable Member wants to personalise things, but I would be grateful if you could advise him, Madam Deputy Speaker, around those things.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Do you accept that as—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not accept that because the legislation states the Premier shall table. That is his responsibility.

The Deputy Speaker: That was not my comment.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh.

The Deputy Speaker: That who produces them, the civil service produces them for tabling.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, the Premier shall table them.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Now, I like to think Madam Deputy Speaker, if I was the Minister, if I was the Minister and I was required by law to produce something, I would make sure all the relevant things I, as a Minister, was accountable for—by law, to this Parliament and the people of Bermuda—would be done. And if they were not done, I certainly would not pass the buck, Madam

Deputy Speaker. I cannot speak for others, but I know how I would behave with accountability, and I know what the people of Bermuda expect from accountability from their leaders.

Now, we also talked about the supplementals today. And we understood, you know, sometimes things happen, things come late, and we appreciate the civil service is busy, the Premier is busy, Minister so-and-so is busy. Sometimes things get missed. Now, it came to my attention in December that we were missing these reports, required by law for the Premier to table, as stated by the legislation. And I said, you know, let me do the respectful, collegial thing. And I sent him an email, private, personal email. *Hey, Premier, so-and-so, so forth. Hey, look forward to you producing these in due time.* Okay? December.

And you know, we have a little more back and forth. And then, as you know, right before we broke for the spring, we had the last two, but one, were produced, and then we had today's. So here we are, June 1 on Monday. Premier was notified of, let us call it (perhaps, must be) an oversight, back in December. And we do not have reports for three years in the middle.

And again, like I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate things can fall through the cracks. But in April I emailed the Premier to assist him with his memory. I know he is very busy. And as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the things that we hold for here, on the One Bermuda Alliance, is, perhaps, the role of Minister of Finance and the role of Premier should be separated. Because they are big jobs, and they need the full dedication so that things do not fall through the cracks.

Now, if you do not mind, I might like to quote from my email, with your leave, and the Premier's response.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

Shadow Minister, we will endeavour to table the current report by May. I will give no commitment on old reports and the resources required to produce those matters are, in my judgment, better used to advance Throne Speech initiatives, et cetera.

Now, let me ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, rhetorically, of course.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, because I would not answer.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Would you require a commitment, or non-commitment, for someone to execute his duties as laid out by the law of the land? No.

Would you imagine that the leader of the country or a Minister or any Government official would exercise discretion as to which laws they might or might not follow, especially when respectfully reminded and

given ample time to rectify (no doubt) inadvertent mistakes?

I remind this House that the Government wanted to pass a law to criminalise doctors for failing to submit data returns on time. Right? Now, obviously, that did not pass because that was ridiculous. And this House did pass a law to provide penalties, criminal penalties, for people in very stressful situations, who go up into Financial Assistance and have human behaviour. Right? Because no one goes up to Financial Assistance because things are going really well for them.

So, what are the penalties when a senior government official blatantly chooses not to follow the law?

And I would tell you, what do you think the person on the street who is being asked to pay their social insurance on time, to pay their traffic fines, who tries to put up a three-foot fence and has to take it down because they do not have the Planning permission? So, what kind of example is this? And we heard a lot today from some other people in this House about examples in leadership and accountability. And frankly, I am very disappointed. And I would bet that most people would not think that the Government could exercise discretion, willy-nilly as to what laws.

Now, we could have a discussion about, is it reasonable for those reports to happen? That is a different discussion. And if the Government wants to change that law, we could have that discussion. But they have not. You cannot just pick and choose. Right? That is what we talk about when we talk about accountability.

And frankly, I put it on the Government frontbench, and the backbench, to ask yourself, because, you know, frankly, their leader currently is a lame duck.

An Hon. Member: Ooh.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So that . . . that is a fact. That is what you call a leader who is on the way out. Does not make you a bad person. It is just a reflection of the reality of the situation. And so, I would ask the people on the Government benches, as they look to whoever their next leader might be, is this how you want to go? Do you want to pick and choose which laws you choose to abide or not abide?

I had a senior Member of Government say to [me], *DeCouto, why do you care so much? Some of that information is already in the public domain.* I said, *Surely, so-and-so, you are not implying that the Government does not need to follow the law.* Because I am sure that is not what they realised they were saying. Right? And why do I care? A lot of people care. They want to know who is getting paid by the Government. Who are the Ministers hiring? What are they doing? That is why this Government passed that law, that it has not even followed.

So, I would say to this Government, do your job. Follow the laws. If they are not working, we can

have that discussion. But you do not get to pick and choose. That is accountability. And that is setting a good example. So, I look forward to the Premier bringing to this House those three reports that are missing. I appreciate they are a little bit back in time, but perhaps I could cede three of the next seven minutes. He can do a quick whip around with some of his Ministers and say, *Hey, Minister so-and-so, who'd you hire in those three years?* Maybe call Colonel Burch. Maybe he had somebody. Call somebody in the Senate. Maybe they had somebody. I can maybe help him make those calls if he is too busy.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak? There being no other . . . Oh, I recognise the Premier and Finance Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, there is been a lot of contributions this evening. And I know that the Deputy Premier did want to speak, but he is not here. So, I wish everyone a wonderful time, and we will see everyone in two weeks.

Good night.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay.

The House is . . . now has already ended. Okay.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: See you on June the 12th.

An Hon. Member: The 12th.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

[At 6:02 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 12 June 2026.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
12 JUNE 2026
10:02 AM**

Sitting Number 37 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

Some Hon. Members: Good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning.
The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MOMENT OF SILENCE

[In memory of Sir John Swan, KBE, JP]

The Speaker: Members, before we start the business of the day we are going to observe a moment of silence in recognition of the passing of Sir John Swan. But, for the interest of the public who are listening, I am going to also indicate that we will not include condolence remarks [for] Sir John today in our normal Condolence and Congratulatory [Speeches], because there will be a special sitting of Parliament during this period where we will use that occasion for every Member to be able to express, or those Members who wish to express.

So today we observe a moment of silence. But in line with the family's arrangements for the funeral, we will have a special sitting in that period of time. And at that occasion, not only will the current Members be able, but we are going to extend it to former Members who have served with Sir John as well, to have that opportunity to be in the House to give those types of remarks.

So, at this time, we will now observe a moment of silence and then we will move on with the business of the day. Join us in that moment of silence.

[Members rose and observed a moment of silence.]

[Timer chimed]

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

[Gavel]

The Speaker: We will now move on with the Orders of the Day.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 15 and 29 May 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes of 15 and 29 May have been circulated. Are there any amendments required?
There are none.
The Minutes will be printed as confirmed.

[Minutes of 15 and 29 May 2026 confirmed.]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER OR
MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: We received notice that the Honourable Wayne Furbert will be absent today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: We have three such papers this morning. The first is in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.
Minister.

**REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF BERMUDA
2020–2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Regulatory Authority of Bermuda 2020–2021 Annual Report](#).

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

COST OF LIVING (ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026

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

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Cost of Living \(Essential Commodities\) Amendment Regulations 2026](#) as made by the Minister responsible for Consumer Affairs in exercise of the power conferred by section 10E of the Cost of Living Commission Act 1974.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The third is in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF COOPERATIVE LEGISLATION IN BERMUDA

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly a report entitled: [The Proposed Introduction of Cooperative Legislation in Bermuda](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

The Speaker: Before I move on to Petitions, I would also like to acknowledge that you see a new face assisting the Sergeant-at-Arms today. Mr. Grant is understudying the Sergeant-at-Arms at the moment, so that when we need assistance he will be available.

So, we thank Mr. Grant for making himself available this morning. [We] appreciate it.

[Desk thumping]

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have quite a few this morning.

There are 10 such Statements. The first Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of National Security.

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, colleagues and the listening public.

HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS FOR THE 2026 ATLANTIC HURRICANE SEASON

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the public with a timely reminder as Bermuda enters the 2026 Atlantic hurricane season. The season officially began on 1 June and will continue until 30 November.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that much of the advice shared at the start of every hurricane season may sound familiar. Residents have heard before that they should check their shutters, prepare supplies, review their family plans, and follow official updates. That is because some messages are too important to say only once. [Hurricane preparedness](#) is one of them. We repeat this information each year because it helps families prepare, reduces confusion when a storm threatens, and supports the safety and resilience of our Island.

Mr. Speaker, each year, as hurricane season begins, we are reminded of a simple but important truth. Bermuda does not need our busy season to be affected. We only need one storm, in the wrong place, at the wrong time, to cause serious disruption to our Island. This year, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, commonly known as NOAA, has forecast a below-normal Atlantic hurricane season. That forecast may be welcomed news, but it must not lead to complacency.

A lower storm count does not mean there is no risk to Bermuda. It does not mean that Bermuda will be spared. It does not mean that families, businesses, schools, churches, care homes, and essential services can afford to wait until a storm is already approaching our shores before preparing.

Mr. Speaker, the message from the Ministry of National Security is clear: prepare early, prepare properly, and do not wait. The time to prepare is now, while conditions are calm, while supplies are available, and while families have the opportunity to make clear decisions.

Bermuda has weathered many storms. We have seen periods of high activity, and we have seen seasons when the Atlantic appeared quieter. But our experience has taught us that a quieter season can still produce a dangerous storm. That is why hurricane preparedness must never be treated as a last-minute exercise. Preparedness is not panic. Preparedness is discipline. It is responsibility. It is care for our families, our neighbours, and our community.

Mr. Speaker, as Chair of the Emergency Measures Organisation, I want to assure this Honourable House that the Government's emergency management partners remain focused on readiness for the season ahead. The Emergency Measures Organisation Executive will meet on Tuesday, June 16, for their annual Hurricane Preparedness briefing. The Ministry of National Security, the Bermuda Weather Service, the Department of Communications, the Bermuda Police Service, the Royal Bermuda Regiment, the

Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, the Department of Health, the Ministry of Public Works, utility providers, and other key agencies all play an important role in Bermuda's hurricane readiness and response. Our work is coordinated through the Emergency Measures Organisation, and our decisions are guided by official information and the best available advice.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to remind the public that the Bermuda Weather Service is the authoritative source of weather information for Bermuda. When a storm threatens the Island, the Bermuda Weather Service monitors the system and provides briefings to the Emergency Measures Organisation. Watches and warnings are issued based on that official advice. Residents should therefore follow official Government and Bermuda Weather Service updates. Please do not rely on rumours, social media speculation, or unofficial commentary when making decisions about your safety and the safety of your family.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to remind residents that the Government's official Emergency Broadcast Station is 100.1 FM. The station becomes active when a hurricane is imminent and provides important public safety information and official updates. For that reason, every household should include a portable radio and spare batteries in their hurricane kit, so that they can continue to receive official information during power outages or service disruptions.

Mr. Speaker, when a watch is issued, residents should complete their final preparations. When a warning is issued, storm conditions are expected within 36 hours, and residents should follow all official guidance without delay. This includes guidance on public safety, shelters, road conditions, public services, and any other measures that may be necessary to protect life and property.

Mr. Speaker, hurricane preparedness is not only a household responsibility. It is also a community responsibility. In true Bermuda spirit, I am asking residents to check on elderly relatives, neighbours who live alone, and persons who may need help with preparations. A simple phone call, a visit, or assistance with securing a property can make a meaningful difference before a storm arrives. Businesses and community organisations should also review their continuity plans now. Staff contact lists, emergency procedures, backup systems, and communication plans should be checked before they are needed.

So today, Mr. Speaker, I urge every resident of Bermuda: do not wait for the first storm alert. Do not wait for the shelves to be empty. Do not wait until the wind begins to rise. Prepare now. Stay informed. Follow official guidance. Check on your neighbours. And let us do our part together to keep Bermuda safe this hurricane season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Good morning again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ONLINE RENTAL SCAMS AND THE PROTECTION OF CONSUMERS

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda of the rise in [online rental scams](#) and the steps that the Ministry of Home Affairs is taking through its Consumer Affairs section to protect residents who are searching for a home.

Mr. Speaker, a home is the foundation of every family's security. A rental scam strikes at that foundation before a family ever holds a key. Consumer Affairs has received a growing number of reports from residents who have encountered fraudulent rental listings online. Some have already been deceived. And we know that this loss is rarely only financial, but rather, it carries stress, uncertainty, and the fear that the search for shelter in the home can no longer be trusted. This House has a duty to meet that fear with plain guidance and with the protection as established in law.

Mr. Speaker, the report follows a consistent pattern. Individuals posing as real estate agents, landlords, or property managers use online platforms to post listings for properties they do not control. These listings rely on stolen photographs and details copied from genuine homes. Prospective tenants are then pressured to share [personal] information, copies of identification, banking details, [and] upfront deposits, before any opportunity to view the property in person.

The Ministry confirms that these tactics are the established markers of fraud. Awareness of them is the first and strongest defence available to every resident.

Mr. Speaker, Consumer Affairs advises every resident searching for rental accommodation take the following steps:

- Treat unsolicited rental offers from unknown individuals with caution.
- Withhold money, deposits, [wire] transfers, and/or banking information from unverified persons.
- Question any listing priced [well below market value].
- Request an in-person [viewing] in every case.
- Verify the identity of any landlord, property manager, or real estate agent before sharing personal information or making any payment.
- Treat claims of being overseas, claims of being unavailable to meet, and pressure to act quickly as cause for concern.

Mr. Speaker, through support from the Consumer Affairs officers, [we] have identified the common signs of a likely rental scam:

- a request for payment [before a viewing];
- a refusal to meet in person;
- contact limited to social media or messaging apps;
- advertisements that are poorly written or inconsistent;
- stock images, or photographs copied from other websites;
- an early request for sensitive personal information.

Residents should keep records of all correspondence, advertisements, receipts, and payment transactions related to any rental inquiry. Where something appears suspicious the safe course is to stop communicating, then to verify the listing independently before any further steps.

Mr. Speaker, residents are protected in law as well as in practice. Under the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Act 1978, [certain] residential properties in Bermuda remain subject to rent control. Prospective tenants hold rights under that framework, and they should understand those rights and the terms of any tenancy agreement before signing. [No housing decision should rest on an online advertisement alone.]

Any resident who believes they may have encountered a rental scam should contact Consumer Affairs and report the activity. Reports can be made by calling 297-7627, or by emailing consumers@gov.bm. Every report strengthens the Ministry's ability to identify these schemes and to warn others before harm is done.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry accepts that households across Bermuda are facing real strain in securing affordable houses. The work to widen access to that housing is led by the Ministry responsible for housing. The Ministry of Home Affairs advances its own part of that shared effort. It supports the legislative reforms and it carries the consumer protection and awareness that guard residents inside the market. Reform of the Landlord and Tenant Act is still underway as part of those legislative efforts. The Ministry will update this Honourable House on a new consultative draft in the coming month.

Mr. Speaker, affordability is structural, and the dignity of a secure home sits at the centre of it. Consumer protection is the architecture that keeps that home within honest reach. When a resident loses a deposit to a fraud, they lose more than money. A resident therefore loses confidence that the search for a home can be safe. This Government will not allow that confidence to be stolen. Through awareness, through the support of those already harmed, and through the steady protection of consumers, the Ministry will hold that line.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement is also in your name. Would you like to continue with that one?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I also rise today to update this Honourable House, and through it the people of Bermuda, on the [fuel and energy risks](#) the Government has identified, the steps already taken to protect Bermudian households, and the posture of vigilance with which this Government is managing a volatile global energy

environment. The public is entitled to know what their Government also knows, and to know that Bermuda's risks are being monitored with intentionality and addressed with competence.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda imports the fuel on which our electricity, our transport, and our daily life depend. That is a fact of our geography, and it means that we are susceptible to world events far beyond our shores. Since March of this year the Ministry of Home Affairs has publicly advised that it is closely monitoring the impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East on global oil markets and the potential consequences for Bermuda's fuel and energy costs. Instability in the [Persian] Gulf and disruption to global shipping and energy supply chains carry direct consequences for prices at the pumps and on our bills. This Government did not wait for those consequences to arrive. We watched, we prepared, and we acted.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this Government does not assess these risks in isolation. We study how the world's most exposed and most capable economies are reading this moment, and we take their assessments seriously. The Strait of Hormuz has now been closed for months, with no clear path to resolution. The effects are no longer confined to price. Some economies are already experiencing fuel shortages, reduced flights, and factory delays. And the disruption is spreading beyond energy into fertiliser, food, shipping insurance, and other essential inputs. The Prime Minister of Singapore, leading one of the world's most import-dependent and energy-sophisticated nations, put it plainly at his country's May Day Rally this year. [Even] when the Strait of Hormuz reopens, there will be no immediate return to normal. Ports and energy infrastructure have been damaged and shipping lanes [must] be cleared, he shared. Confidence must therefore be restored. But, like Singapore, Bermuda does not face this moment from a position of weakness. We face it informed, organised, and early.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is equally aware of the international policy guidance on how moments like this should be managed. Last month, the International Monetary Fund published its guidance on responding to the global energy and food price shocks. Fiscal responses must be *targeted, temporary, timely, and tailored*. It should address vulnerable households, [and they should be] shielded with targeted, time limited support.

This Government enacted an exceptional measure in these exceptional circumstances with a defined six-month term. It is tailored because the Ministry of Finance's customs duty relief preserves the integrity of the supply chain rather than having importers absorb the losses. And it is timely also because it was issued the day before the increase which would have been the date that it reached the pump. The same discipline will govern every step that follows. Measures will be sequenced, they will be proportionate to the shock, and they will be designed to protect households without straining the public finances on which all of our protections ultimately depend.

Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, 15 April 2026, the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a Retail Fuels ([Consumer] Protection Standstill) Ministerial Direction 2026, pursuant to the Regulatory Authority Act [2011] and the Fuels Act [2022]. The Direction establishes a standstill ceiling on retail fuel prices for a period of six months, through mid-October. No licensed importer, wholesaler, or retailer may charge above that ceiling. The effect was immediate and tangible.

Mr. Speaker, this protection was designed to be fair to every part of the supply chain. Alongside the Direction, the Ministry of Finance signalled that it would operate a targeted customs duty relief measure, building on the approach that was used successfully in 2022 when fuel prices were last frozen. Licensed fuel importers and retailers are not disadvantaged by the standstill and are made whole. The Government, in support of the public, will cover any verified revenue shortfall for licensed importers during this period. That is what responsible intervention looks like, and that is what our Government continues to do on behalf of [households] ensuring that they are protected and ensuring the integrity of Bermuda's fuel supply [is preserved].

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to confirm to this Honourable House that the Regulatory Authority's [Board] aligned its [retail] fuel prices with the standstill provisions, and the Authority also has committed to continued engagement with the Ministry of Home Affairs, [the Ministry of] Finance, and industry stakeholders on a clear and effective mechanism that aligns with Government policy while safeguarding the long-term reliability of Bermuda's fuel supply.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members should also understand that this is just the Government's first step. It is not the last. Awareness without action is not governance, and this Government intends to remain both aware and decisive. The Ministry of Home Affairs, in coordination with the Ministry of National Security, is constantly addressing and having oversight over fuel supply security, contingency planning, and the protection of essential services.

The Government is diversifying its supply relationships and will continue to explore every responsible avenue to support the public. As further strategic steps are confirmed, the public will be updated. I will not pre-empt additional measures that remain under active consideration, but I will give this Honourable House the assurance that the work is underway, it is deliberate, it is informed by the best international evidence available, and it is coordinated across government.

Mr. Speaker, this work sits within a wider national direction. On 16 April 2026, the Ministry opened the proposed National Electricity Sector Policy [2026] for public consultation, the first comprehensive update to Bermuda's electricity policy in over a decade. In response to public requests, the consultation was extended to broaden participation. Now that the consultation has closed, we are thanking every resident, business, and organisation that participated. Those contributions are being logged, considered, and reflected in the final policy. Engagement will continue beyond the formal consultation window, because durable

energy policy requires sustained input from households, industry, civil society, and technical experts.

Mr. Speaker, the measures announced during the Budget Debate, including portable energy systems and community solar models, are aligned to this same strategy. But alignment cannot stop at Government. Bermuda's energy ecosystem, the Government, the regulator, the utility, fuel suppliers, businesses, and households, must operate in tandem. Not against one another. Not in duplication of one another. And never without the public and the public interest at the fore. This Government has made that decision, and it expects every actor in the sector to make it as well. Bermuda is small and the stakes are high for institutions to pull in different directions.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I extend an invitation to every household, business, and public body across this Island. In a growing world of technology and fuel dependence, energy consciousness is a shared national responsibility. Simple, consistent choices matter. Switching off what is not in use. Managing cooling and hot water sensibly. Choosing efficient appliances and equipment. Every kilowatt hour saved reduces a household bill today and reduces fuel Bermuda must import tomorrow. Energy efficiency is not a sacrifice. It is the most immediate contribution each of us can make to Bermuda's resilience.

Mr. Speaker, the Government knows the risks Bermuda faces. We are monitoring them with intentionality, and we are reading them through the same lens as the world's most capable governments and institutions. We have held the line at the pump, and we are coordinating across government to secure our supply. And we are building the policy framework that reduces our exposure for good. I invite every resident to act with us, because energy security in Bermuda will be built by all of us, together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement is also in your name. Would you like to continue?

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

GOOGLE SUBSEA CABLE LANDINGS: NUVEM AND SOL, UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on a significant milestone in our journey to secure Bermuda's place in the global digital economy.

On Wednesday of this week, Bermuda marked the [successful landing of two Google subsea cables](#), Nuvem and Sol, and the hosting of an official cable landing ceremony in St. David's. These are events that signify the continued confidence of one of the world's most consequential technology companies in our jurisdiction.

Nuvem, derived from the Portuguese word for "cloud," will connect South Carolina to Portugal. Sol, meaning "sun" in Spanish, will connect Florida to Spain. Google has confirmed that when complete Sol will be the only in-

service fibreoptic cable connecting Florida to Europe. All of this will happen through the cable landing station currently under construction in St. David's.

Mr. Speaker, as I have previously stated in this Honourable House, Google did not choose Bermuda by chance. This week's developments result from deliberate policy choices, regulatory clarity, and a steadfast commitment to positioning Bermuda as a trusted and strategic partner in global connectivity. The landing of any submarine cable represents a significant national milestone. These systems are the arteries of the modern digital economy, and Google's presence in Bermuda reflects both confidence in our jurisdiction and the strength of our long-term vision, initiated with the enactment of the Submarine Communications Cables Act 2020.

This legislation is a clear and deliberate step by this Government to position Bermuda as a key player in global connectivity. It established the submarine cable protection zone and a clear approval pathway, with applications determined within 60 to 75 business days because this Government completed the environmental groundwork in advance. That is regulatory clarity in practice.

Mr. Speaker, this milestone also delivers on the Bermuda Economic Development Strategy 2023–2027, announced by the Ministry of Economy and Labour in June 2023, which names subsea cables among the sectors best suited for foreign investment in Bermuda. The strategy named the sector, and the legislation opened the door. This week the investment landed.

Mr. Speaker, the significance of these developments extends far beyond infrastructure. What has transpired this week puts Bermuda at the intersection of connectivity between North America and Europe. It ultimately enhances

- digital resilience, through added redundancy and network diversity;
- economic diversification, expanding Bermuda beyond its traditional sectors;
- innovation capacity, enabling improved access to cloud computing and artificial intelligence; and
- jurisdictional attractiveness, strengthening global confidence in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, jurisdictions around the world have shown what a cable landing can become when it is matched with deliberate policy. Singapore now hosts 26 subsea cable landings, and its digital economy contributed 18.6 per cent of GDP and 214,000 technology jobs in 2024. Ireland turned its position as a transatlantic connectivity hub into a data centre sector that added an estimated €7.3 billion to its economy, per Trinity Business School, 2025. And at the European end of Nuvem sits . . . We also see that connectivity helped to attract US\$10 billion through artificial intelligence investment, announced in [November] 2025.

Each of these jurisdictions paired connectivity with regulatory clarity, skills, and energy planning. The lesson is [consistent]. Connectivity opens the door. Policy walks the economy through it. Bermuda is applying that same discipline sized to our Island and shaped by our people. Beyond

infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, Google's relationship with Bermuda is delivering tangible benefits [through]:

- Investment in STEM education, and digital literacy, including support for Bermuda College, the Bermuda Zoological Society and St. David's Primary.
- Programmes, such as Grow with Google, through which 500 scholarships have been awarded to Bermuda residents for career and digital skills training, with access through Bermuda College until 31 December 2027, ensuring Bermudians are equipped with future-ready digital skills which are validated through professional certification.
- A commitment, alongside the St. David's Island Historical Society, to assist restoration for Annie's Bay and its heritage trail, preserving the history and unique maritime heritage of St. David's.
- The fostering of a collaborative model between the Government, the private sector, and our regulators, demonstrating how to deliver complex, high-value national projects.

Mr. Speaker, for the people of Bermuda, these benefits are practical. Two cables interconnecting on our Island mean that when a cable is damaged anywhere in the Atlantic traffic can be rerouted, and our families, schools, hospitals, and businesses can stay connected. The international evidence on connectivity is clear, and the International Telecommunication Union found in 2020 that a 10.0 per cent increase in fixed broadband penetration raises GDP by an average of 0.77 per cent. Bermuda's gains will come through resilience, through skills, and through the new industries this infrastructure invites.

Mr. Speaker, these cables carry opportunity—opportunity to expand Bermuda's role in the subsea cable industry. Together these two cables establish a resilient "Digital Exchange Port" that anchors Bermuda as a critical international switching point for global data, cloud services, and the future of AI. Bermuda has become a key place in geography for technologies that will underpin the next stage of global economic growth. Opportunity to attract adjacent industries that depend on secure, high-capacity connectivity, and opportunity to build an ecosystem that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and technological advancement. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is fast becoming a digital gem; an Atlantic hub at the crossroads of international data flows.

Mr. Speaker, what we witnessed on Wednesday in St. David's was the intersection of local heritage, the installation of high-tech infrastructure, and Bermuda's future at the forefront of the next era of global digital growth. Wednesday's ceremony brought together Government, industry, and community stakeholders to celebrate progress and to reaffirm a shared commitment to ensuring Bermuda derives lasting value from Google's confidence in our remarkable Island.

I extend my thanks to Google, its partners, our regulators, technical teams, and the Bermudian workforce whose collaboration made this milestone possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA, IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Hon. Owen Darrell: I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update regarding the [implementation of ridesharing](#) in Bermuda, which officially launched on 10 June 2026 as part of the Government's broader transportation modernisation initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of regulated ridesharing has been designed to complement Bermuda's existing public transportation network and taxi industry by helping address long-standing transportation gaps, particularly during peak demand periods, evenings, weekends, holidays, and major events. From the [outset], this Government has been clear in its approach: taxis first, rideshare when needed.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the initial implementation phase is progressing positively.

To date, the TCD [Transport Control Department] has received approximately 79 applications for ridesharing permits. Of these, 19 applicants have successfully met the requirements for approval. At this stage of the process, approved applicants are required to remit payment for their permit, licence plates, decals, and operator's badge. Of the approved group, approximately 17 individuals have completed all required payments.

Mr. Speaker, the remaining 16 applicants are currently at the pre-approval stage. This [stage] requires applicants to complete final requirements such as vehicle inspections and purchasing the necessary enhanced insurance coverage. In addition, approximately 20 individuals have now obtained a Public Service Vehicle Licence, enabling them to be considered for participation in Bermuda's ridesharing programme.

Mr. Speaker, taxis continue to play a vital role in providing transportation for our residents and visitors. As such, it remains important to monitor participation within the sector. As of 5 June 2026, Mr. Speaker, 72 of the 108 previously unlicensed taxis had renewed their licence and returned to service.

Data shared by a despatch stakeholder indicates that transportation activity accelerated following the ridesharing legislative announcement. Year-over-year growth increased from approximately 34 per cent prior to the legislation announcement to approximately 52 per cent thereafter, suggesting increased participation across the

transportation sector and improved transportation availability for residents and visitors.

Mr. Speaker, this reflects precisely what this Government intended—a regulated, balanced transportation model that improves service availability for the public while continuing to prioritise and support Bermuda's taxi industry.

All ridesharing operators remain subject to Government oversight, including PSV licensing requirements, vehicle inspections, insurance requirements, and operational standards established by the Transport Control Department and the Public Service Vehicle Licensing Board.

Mr. Speaker, as previously communicated, the ridesharing framework includes a maximum of 150 permits during this phase. Given the public interest shown to date, applications will continue on a rolling basis and will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis until the permit cap has been reached. The Ministry, TCD, and industry stakeholders will continue to monitor implementation and support operators as the programme expands across our Island.

Mr. Speaker, the timing of this launch is especially significant as Bermuda enters the busy summer tourism season, including Carnival in Bermuda and other [major] events that generate increased transportation demand across the Island. This initiative helps ensure Bermuda is better positioned to move residents and visitors safely, efficiently, and reliably during periods of peak activity.

The Ministry will continue to monitor implementation closely, engage with stakeholders, and make operational adjustments where necessary to ensure the initiative continues to serve the broader public interest.

Mr. Speaker, transportation reliability remains one of the most important aspects of the visitor and resident experience alike. This initiative is another important step in how we modernise Bermuda's transportation system and improve accessibility and reliability for the public.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors.

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. How are you?

[No audible response]

DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES BUILDING CAPACITY FOR PARENTING

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise today before this Honourable House to provide an update on the efforts of the Department of Child and Family Services to [strengthen parenting capacity](#) within our community through parent coaching certification and parenting skills development initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, the department's Mirrors programme, has placed a strategic focus on parenting skills and co-regulation skill-building for the current year. These efforts are designed to support both the clients of the Department of Child and Family Services and the broader community through a series of prevention-focused parenting workshops and a Parent Coaching Certification Programme. This certification programme will equip identified staff members with specialised parent coaching credentials in 2027, enhancing our capacity to support families across the prevention and intervention continuum. The Parent Coaching Certification training will commence in August 2026 and conclude in April 2027.

Mr. Speaker, this work is informed by data. Findings from the department's Family Strengths and Needs Assessment indicate that parenting skills and coping and mental health skills continue to represent the greatest areas of need among families receiving services. Last year, parenting skills emerged as one of the highest identified needs among families served by the department. This trend continued into the first quarter of this year, with 72 per cent of the 57 households assessed demonstrating a need for parenting skill development. Coping skills and mental health needs ranked second, with 70 per cent of households identifying challenges in these areas.

Mr. Speaker, in response to these findings, the department, through its Mirrors programme, will implement a comprehensive 28-week Parent Coaching Certification Programme. Delivered through prevention services, this initiative will strengthen community-based support while also enhancing intervention services provided to department clients. The programme will develop a cadre of certified parent [coaches] equipped with evidence-informed strategies to support parents in building stronger relationships, improving communication, and fostering healthy child development.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the Parent Coaching Certification Programme, the Mirrors programme will partner with the Youth Mental Health Plan and Bermuda's schools to expand access to parenting support throughout the community. Through these partnerships, the Keys of Excellent Parenting workshops will be delivered within school communities and sporting clubs, creating greater opportunities for parents and caregivers to strengthen their parenting skills, build healthy family relationships, and develop practical strategies that support the social and emotional well-being of children and young people. By bringing these workshops directly into community settings where families naturally gather, we aim to reduce barriers to participation, increase accessibility, and strengthen the network of support available to Bermuda's parents and caregivers. The Keys of Excellent Parenting workshop series will run from September 2026 through June 2027, providing ongoing opportunities for engagement and learning throughout the academic year.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the year, the Mirrors programme will measure and evaluate the impact of these initiatives quarterly to ensure that they are meeting the needs

of families and contributing to positive outcomes for children and youth.

Mr. Speaker, the department's Family Preservation Team is also strengthening its specialised response to families affected by abuse and neglect through targeted professional development. Identified staff members have received training in the Nurturing Parenting Programme, an evidence-based approach designed specifically for families involved in child abuse and neglect cases. This training will enhance the department's capacity to support parents and caregivers in developing healthy parenting practices, strengthening attachment and family relationships, improving self-regulation, and reducing risk factors associated with maltreatment. This specialised training complements the broader parenting capacity-building strategy by ensuring that staff are equipped to respond effectively to the varying levels of need presented by families across both prevention and intervention services.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the parents who have reached out for support. Asking for help is not always easy. However, these parents have demonstrated courage and commitment by recognising the importance of building a network of support for the growth, development, and well-being of their children. We thank them for placing their trust in the services and community supports available to them.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Department of Child and Family Services, and the Ministry, I extend sincere thanks to our community partners and members of the public for their ongoing engagement and commitment to safeguarding Bermuda's children and youth. As the saying goes, it takes a community to raise a child. Together, we can continue building stronger families and brighter futures for Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

ELECTORAL REFORM WORKING GROUP, ESTABLISHMENT OF

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I rise today to inform this Honourable House of the establishment of the [Electoral Reform Working Group](#), an important step in advancing the Government's Comprehensive Electoral Reform Programme.

Mr. Speaker, over the past several months, the Government has undertaken extensive public engagement, consultation, research, and policy development on a broad range of electoral reform matters. Through town hall meetings, stakeholder discussions, youth engagement sessions, written submissions, feedback from overseas

Bermudians, candidate surveys, and operational reviews, valuable perspectives have been gathered from across our community.

The Government has consistently maintained that electoral reform must strengthen our democracy, improve public confidence in the electoral process, and ensure that our electoral system remains fair, accessible, secure, and fit for purpose.

As Honourable Members will be aware, the establishment of the Working Group represents the next step in this process, following the completion of extensive consultation, research, and policy development. Today, I can confirm that the Electoral Reform Working Group has now been formally established.

Mr. Speaker, the Working Group has been created to provide independent review and practical scrutiny of the Government's electoral reform proposals before legislative drafting is finalised. Its role is to assess the evidence gathered to date, review policy proposals, identify risks and safeguards, and provide recommendations to support the next phase of reform.

This work will focus on four key areas

- voter access and registration;
- election day processes and administration;
- campaign and election finance; and
- governance and oversight.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Senator Lauren Bell, JP, will serve as Chair of the Electoral Reform Working Group, and Ms. McKenzie[-Kohl] Tuckett will serve as Deputy Chair.

The full membership of the Working Group is as follows:

- Senator Lauren Bell, JP, Chair
- Ms. McKenzie[-Kohl] Tuckett, Deputy Chair
- Ms. Juanae Crockwell
- Mr. Theo Wolffe
- Mr. Max Blakeney
- Mr. Trew Morris
- Ms. Tenia K. Woolridge (Parliamentary Registrar)
- Ms. Jahdia Spencer
- Mr. Geoffrey Faiella
- Mr. Michael Anthony Charles Smith
- Dr. Lana Talbot

Mr. Speaker, these individuals have been selected not only for the experience and expertise they bring, but also because, collectively, they represent a broad cross-section of Bermuda's community. The Government was deliberate in seeking a Working Group that reflects a range of professional backgrounds, generations, perspectives, and lived experiences. Mr. Speaker, that balance is intentional, because electoral reform affects every Bermudian and must reflect that range of experience.

Members have not been appointed to advocate for any political party, organisation, or special interest. Rather, they have been appointed to apply their judgment, experience, and constructive scrutiny to the proposals before them and to help ensure that any reforms ultimately brought

before Parliament are practical, effective, and capable of commanding public confidence.

The Working Group will receive consultation findings, policy papers, operational assessments, comparative research, and other supporting materials. Particular attention will be given to issues including absentee voting for overseas students, campaign finance regulation, voter registration, Election Day administration, and options for strengthening electoral governance, including consideration of an Electoral Commission.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of absentee voting emerged as one of the most frequently raised electoral matters during and following the last General Election. Concerns were expressed by Bermudians studying overseas who wished to participate in the democratic process but faced barriers to doing so. The Government has listened carefully to those concerns, and the Working Group will examine practical and secure options to improve voter access while preserving the integrity and public confidence that are fundamental to our electoral system.

Mr. Speaker, I have already met with members of the Working Group as part of an initial orientation session, where the timeline and expectations for this work were discussed in detail. There is a clear understanding among members that this review must proceed with focus, discipline, and urgency.

Mr. Speaker, the Group has been established as an accelerated review exercise and is expected to complete its work within four weeks, with provision for a short extension if required. This phase is not about restarting consultation. It is about testing, refining, and finalising the direction of reform based on the work already completed. Upon completion, it will submit a recommendations report to support Cabinet consideration and legislative drafting.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has been clear that electoral reform should be guided by evidence, informed by practical experience, and tailored to Bermuda's unique circumstances. The establishment of this Working Group reflects that commitment.

I would like to thank Senator Bell, Ms. Tuckett, and all members of the Working Group for their willingness to serve. Their contribution will play an important role as we continue the work of strengthening Bermuda's democratic institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I remain committed to bringing the necessary electoral reform legislation before this Honourable House in September 2026, and I look forward to receiving the Working Group's recommendations in the weeks ahead.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

the Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

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

THE PROPOSED INTRODUCTION OF COOPERATIVE LEGISLATION IN BERMUDA

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lay for the information of this Honourable House the Government's [Proposed Introduction of Cooperative Legislation](#) in Bermuda.

This policy proposal represents an important step in our ongoing efforts to diversify Bermuda's economy, empower our people, and create new pathways for inclusive and sustainable economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, cooperatives have a proud history in Bermuda. From the Friendly Societies that emerged after emancipation, to institutions such as the Bermuda Credit Union, Bermudians have long embraced the principles of collective action, mutual support, and shared prosperity. However, despite this history, Bermuda currently lacks a modern legal framework specifically designed to support and regulate cooperative enterprises.

The absence of such legislation has limited the growth and development of cooperatives as a [viable] business model. Existing legislation was not designed to accommodate enterprises that are democratically owned and controlled by their members and operated for their collective benefit. This policy proposal seeks to address that.

Mr. Speaker, the Government recognises that cooperatives can play a significant role in building a more resilient and diversified economy. They offer opportunities for workers, entrepreneurs, farmers, fishermen, residents, and communities to pool resources, share ownership, and participate directly in economic development.

The proposed framework will establish cooperatives as a distinct legal entity in Bermuda and create a dedicated Registrar of Cooperative Societies to provide oversight, registration, and support functions. The legislation will be grounded in internationally recognised cooperative principles and best practices while being tailored to Bermuda's unique economic circumstances.

The policy also outlines opportunities for cooperative development in sectors such as agriculture and fisheries, housing, renewable energy, technology, and sports organisations. These sectors present opportunities to strengthen local ownership, reduce dependency on imports, promote innovation, and create new economic opportunities for Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative is not simply about creating a new legal structure. It is about expanding economic participation. It is about empowering communities. It is about providing Bermudians with another tool to build wealth, create jobs, and strengthen economic resilience. The Government's vision is to position Bermuda as a leading small island jurisdiction in the development of cooperative enterprises. By establishing a modern legislative and institutional framework, we can foster a culture of shared ownership, democratic participation, and sustainable development.

I wish to acknowledge the work of the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation, particularly its

Economic and Cooperative Development Unit, along with local stakeholders and international partners, whose contributions have helped shape this proposal.

Mr. Speaker, the laying of this policy proposal marks the beginning of an important journey. I commend this [policy] proposal to this Honourable House and look forward to working with Members, stakeholders, and the wider community as we advance this important initiative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide an update to this Honourable House and to members of the public on the [status of the Ebola virus](#) disease and its relevance to Bermuda.

On May 17, 2026, the World Health Organization declared Ebola virus disease a public health emergency of international concern due to ongoing outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. This designation reflects the seriousness of the situation, given the potential for international spread, and the need for cooperated and coordinated global surveillance, prevention, and response efforts.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to reassure this Honourable House and the public that there are currently no confirmed cases of the Ebola virus disease in Bermuda. While the risk of Ebola being imported into Bermuda remains low, the Ministry of Health remains vigilant and is taking every necessary precaution. The Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit continues to actively monitor global developments and maintain measures of preparedness, including disease surveillance, deploying early detection protocols, coordination with the Customs and Immigration Departments, and collaboration with international public health partners to ensure that we are ready to respond swiftly and effectively should the situation in Bermuda change.

Mr. Speaker, Ebola is a serious and often fatal viral illness. The virus spreads through direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person, or through contaminated surfaces or objects such as bedding or clothing. It can also be transmitted through contact with an infected animal in the affected regions.

Symptoms typically appear between 2 days to 21 days after exposure, most commonly within 8 to 10 days. Early symptoms include fever, severe headache, fatigue, and muscle pain. These symptoms may progress to vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, and in some cases, unexplained bleeding or bruising.

Mr. Speaker, if any individual develops symptoms consistent with Ebola and has a relevant travel history, they must not present themselves directly to a health care facility

without prior notice. Instead, they should contact the Emergency Department at King Edward VII Memorial Hospital in advance, provide information about their symptoms and travel history, and follow the medical guidance provided. This approach, Mr. Speaker, allows the health care teams to implement appropriate infection prevention measures and protects both patients and medical staff from undue exposure.

Mr. Speaker, members of the public are advised to avoid non-essential travel to areas experiencing active Ebola outbreaks. For those who must travel, strict adherence to public health precautions is essential. These include, Mr. Speaker, the following:

- practicing frequent hand hygiene by washing using soap and water or alcohol-based sanitisers;
- avoiding contact with sick individuals;
- avoiding contact with blood or bodily fluids or contaminated surfaces;
- refraining from handling animals, particularly bats or primates;
- avoiding consumption of raw or undercooked meat, including bushmeat;
- avoiding participation in burial practices that involve direct contact with the deceased; and
- practicing safe sex.

Mr. Speaker, travellers returning from affected areas will be screened for symptoms upon arrival by Port Health and Surveillance Officers. Additionally, a travel questionnaire has been introduced as an enhanced screening [measure] to support border protection. Individuals will be monitored for 21 days, starting from the day they left the affected area.

If symptoms develop during this period, I implore individuals to

- immediately self-isolate;
- ensure that others do not come into contact with their blood or bodily fluids or any objects that may have been contaminated;
- avoid public gatherings or public transportation; and
- call the Emergency Department for medical advice.

Mr. Speaker, while the current risk to Bermuda remains low, preparedness is essential. The Ministry of Health, through the Epidemiology and Surveillance Unit, will continue to monitor the situation closely and provide timely updates. I encourage all residents to remain informed, to follow official guidance, and to rely on reputable sources of information.

Mr. Speaker, through awareness, preparedness, and [responsible] action, we can ensure the continued safety and well-being of our community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister. Would you like to proceed with your second one?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform Members of this Honourable House and the listening audience that this month of June will be observed as [Human Immunodeficiency Virus \(HIV\) Awareness month](#); a time for community engagement and renewed commitment to action. Throughout the course of the month the Department of Health will host several activities designed to promote HIV awareness, education, testing, and stigma reduction.

Mr. Speaker, this month is a time when we honour the strength and resilience of long-term survivors who have lived with HIV for decades, including those who have lived with the virus since birth. Thanks to medical advancement and research, HIV is a chronic health condition that can be effectively managed with early diagnosis and consistent treatment. With proper care and community support, people living with HIV are leading long, healthy, and productive lives.

Mr. Speaker, as of December 31, 2025, it is estimated that 306 persons are living with HIV having been diagnosed in Bermuda, corresponding to an overall prevalence of approximately 0.5 per cent. Between 2011 and 2025, the number of new HIV diagnoses has been generally low, with fewer than 10 diagnoses reported annually. In 2024, there were eight new HIV diagnoses, followed by only three in 2025. However, Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, there has been a concerning shift, with four new HIV diagnoses reported in just the last four weeks. This sudden rise underscores the urgent need to intensify awareness efforts, expand access to testing, and strengthen prevention strategies to flatten the uptick in transmission. We must act quickly, compassionately, and collectively.

Mr. Speaker, getting tested is one of the most important steps anyone can take to be certain of their HIV status. Knowing this information is empowering, allowing individuals to make the best choices for their health and the health of their partners. Many people with HIV may not show symptoms for years, but testing allows individuals to take control of their health and protect others.

Mr. Speaker, the [available] antiretroviral therapy can reduce the level of HIV in the blood to a point where it is undetectable. When a person reaches and maintains an undetectable viral load, they cannot transmit HIV to their sexual partners. This is a powerful message of hope and a cornerstone of modern HIV prevention. This is also why getting tested and starting treatment early is so incredibly critical to the health of an individual, to ending the spread of the virus entirely.

Mr. Speaker, certain factors can increase vulnerability to HIV transmission, including limited access to health care, lack of information, and social or economic barriers. Our focus must remain on supporting all individuals at higher risk, without stigma, judgment, or exclusion. That is why at the Hamilton Health Centre free and confidential testing is available. I strongly encourage everyone, regardless of age, background, or perceived risk, to get tested regularly.

Mr. Speaker, while anyone can be affected by HIV regardless of age, gender, or background, certain behaviours increase the chance of transmission. These include the following:

- having unprotected sexual contact;
- sharing needles, syringes, or other drug injection supplies;
- using alcohol or drugs, which can impair judgment and lead to less safe sexual choices; and
- having other sexually transmitted infections can make it easier for HIV to enter the body.

HIV can also be transmitted from mother to child during pregnancy, childbirth, or breastfeeding, without treatment.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognise that while some groups are more frequently affected due to various social factors, HIV does not discriminate, and we must continue to break down the stigma around HIV. Stigma continues to be one of the biggest barriers to prevention, testing and treatment. But normalising these conversations starts at home with parents and children having age-appropriate, honest discussions. It continues in schools, where health education can equip young people with the knowledge to make informed decisions. And it must extend into our broader national dialogue, where openness replaces fear and misinformation. We must foster a national dialogue that is open and honest. Providing our young people and the population at large with accurate information about safe sex and healthy relationships gives them the tools they need to protect themselves and others.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of the month, the public should expect to hear more from the Department of Health via the HIV testing campaign, public service announcements, weekly pop-up information tables, radio interviews, social media advertisements, and educational videos on HIV testing and awareness. There will be several opportunities to continue the conversation, educate our population, and get more information on testing.

Mr. Speaker, as we observe HIV Awareness [and Testing] Month, let us each commit to:

- getting tested and knowing our status;
- practicing safe sex, including correct and consistent condom use;
- seeking accurate information from trusted sources;
- supporting those living with HIV with dignity and respect; and
- replacing fear and stigma with facts and compassion through open and honest conversations.

Mr. Speaker, together, we can build a Bermuda where HIV is no longer stigmatised, where prevention is prioritised, and where every person has access to the care they need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statement period for this morning.

We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

The Speaker: The next item is Premier's questions. And just for the listening audience, whenever Parliament sits on the second Friday of any month, when we get to Question Period there's an addition that we do before Question Period, which is Premier's Question Period. And that is an allotment of 30 minutes prior to the actual Question Period for that given date. So, this morning we have the Premier's Question Period.

The first question for the Premier this morning is from the Opposition Leader.

PREMIER'S QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Opposition Leader, would you like to present your question now?

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, and thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to [you]—

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Ben Smith: —and to the listening audience.

QUESTION 1: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, TRAVEL IMPACT ON BERMUDA

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Premier, considering that the Government is asking for Bermudians to give support to full membership in CARICOM, can the Honourable Premier confirm whether the Government has obtained formal advice from the United States or independent legal experts regarding any potential impact on Bermuda's existing travel privileges, including visa-free access, US pre-clearance arrangements, or any other changes that could impact travel for Bermuda?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. I want to say good morning to you, Mr. Speaker, good morning to all Honourable Members, and I hope that everyone is having an enjoyable start to the holiday weekend.

Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that the Minister who has responsibility for CARICOM has set out all particular matters. There is a forthcoming White Paper, and all of the matters that the Honourable Members may have asked about, or questions for, will be covered inside of that particular White Paper.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, thank you, Mr. Speaker.
So, Mr. Speaker, is the Premier saying that he has not had any interaction or conversation with the US on what impact full CARICOM membership would have on travel for Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there is no expected impact on travel for Bermudians, as we have said at many particular points in time. But I will repeat the statement that I made before, and if there is a question, I will just let the Honourable Leader of the Opposition know that the Government is following its timetable that we set out in order to make sure that we bring these particular matters through a consultative process and bring them forward to debate in this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Supplementary or second question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, considering how public this conversation on CARICOM is, would the Premier agree that it would be important to have a conversation with US representatives to make sure that even this conversation openly, publicly, would not have an impact on the travel arrangements for Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would say that from hearing the Honourable Member from the Opposition, we know the familiar tactic of what they are trying to engage in. It is the same tactic that they tried to engage in as associate members when they were in their former incarnation in 2003. The reality is, we know this, we get it, we understand, it is the modus operandi for the Opposition.

We are following a process, Mr. Speaker, a process of where we are laying out all of the particular information, and the questions of which are being asked are coming, my opinion, from a misinformed position, because there is no impact from this particular level. But if the Honourable Members want to ask that question, if that was part of their submission of which they made to the consultative process, all those matters will be canvassed in the forthcoming White Paper.

The Speaker: Second question?

QUESTION 2: SYSTEMIC FAILURES AT HOSPITAL LEADING TO SERIOUS HARM OR DEATH

Hon. Ben Smith: Second question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, [to] the Honourable Premier: The former Chief of Emergency Services, Dr. Edward Schultz, who served Bermuda for three decades, recently submitted a comprehensive message to the public of Bermuda. And in that he talked about the Bermuda Hospitals Board and warned about overcrowding, patient boarding, bed shortages, so on. And in it, he made mention that potentially those conditions had led to adverse outcomes and even death.

Can the Honourable Premier assure the Honourable House that no patient has suffered serious harm or loss of life as a result of the systemic failures identified by Dr. Schultz?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, what I certainly can say is that the matters that were raised are matters that the Honourable Minister of Health has addressed fully in consultation with the BHB. I'm happy to certainly share with Honourable Members in this House and people who are listening the work that has certainly taken place.

We were informed of Dr. Schultz's concern. There was work that was going on prior to the publication of the letter. There were persons who noted and understood, and I think that the public record will reflect the work of which the Bermuda Hospitals Board has done. I think it's also important to recognise the progress which has been made since the Bermuda Hospitals Board has set a new clear target for six hours from ED boarding, and that is from the decision to admit . . . to transfer a patient that they have had enhanced discharge protocols which have taken place.

And I think it's particularly important to note that [median] boarding time has fallen from what was a very high space of 50 hours down to 20 hours. It's a 60 per cent reduction. Emergency Department overcrowding has eased as a result, supported by the enhanced discharge processes. And the reality where ED times start now is that admitted patients wait a median of five hours before decision to admit, total median time of the ward transfer about 24 hours. It does remain above the target, but most patients who are admitted and treated and discharged [are] within a median of four hours.

I think it's important to note the reason why this is the case, Mr. Speaker, and the reason why this is the case is the challenge which is faced with long-term care. But the way that you address that challenge with long-term care is to make sure that there is additional investment that is being made.

And what is this Government doing? BHB is adding 30 long-term care beds at MWI [Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute]. It's part of the broader strategy to address the need of approximately 365 skilled nursing facility beds by 2035.

We know there's the new build in the West End as well. There are other measures that are taking place, the expansion and the additional beds that have been created at King Edward Memorial Hospital in the general wing to ensure that we are continuing to press forward on this.

So, it is a live issue. The Minister of Health has spoken on this. The new board of the Bermuda Hospitals Board is fully engaged on this particular matter, and [is] happy to continue to update Honourable Members or the Minister of Health is happy to update Honourable Members as this is certainly something within her remit that she has particular close attention being paid to.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we do agree that there seems to have been progress going forward since that report was published. But, Mr. Speaker, my specific question is, Has the Government put in an internal investigation . . . sorry, an independent investigation to ensure that the families that are grieving have an understanding whether there was loss of life due to the issues that now are being fixed?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Minister of Health is on record that an independent investigation has been launched [at] a board level and that is in the public domain.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary or third question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Second supplementary.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to make sure that the Premier is saying that that independent investigation is backward-looking so that it is taking into consideration the potential that lives were lost or people were hurt during the period prior to the changes being implemented that the Premier referred to in his original response to me.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that it is an independent investigation that has been commissioned by the Bermuda Hospitals Board, and we will look into all the matters that have been raised.

The Speaker: Okay.

Third question?

QUESTION 3: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, IMPACT ON BERMUDIAN WORKFORCE

Hon. Ben Smith: Third question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Premier inform this Honourable House whether the Government has completed, commissioned or scheduled a Bermuda-specific assessment of how artificial intelligence may affect the

Bermudian labour market, including administrative, clerical, financial, insurance, professional and public service roles as future demand for skills, hiring and workforce retraining continue to be assessed by the changes of artificial intelligence?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: There were a number of things at the very beginning of that commission, et cetera, et cetera, so I will just try to update the Honourable Member where he is. I think that I've spoken on this publicly. I think that is a matter that is inside the public domain.

I think at the Chamber of Commerce breakfast this year I said the Government is in the process of commissioning. I'm not entirely certain where it is. I know that it is with an economist who specialises in labour and those types of technical issues. It is something that has been done by the Ministry of Finance. I can get back to the Honourable Member on that, but I know that it is the direction of travel. I know that information was sent over to the Financial Secretary, et cetera, so I will sincerely . . . I will get an update.

But on the basis of the question that is being asked, yes, it is important that we examine these issues. But it is not just looking at those things. It's also the Minister who has responsibility for cybersecurity, the Minister of National Security, and also government persons are working to make sure that cybersecurity defences are being beefed up on matters that are related to new artificial intelligence threats. So, there are a number of things that we are doing on this aspect.

[I am] happy to work with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, if there are committees that want to be formed, to talk about these things and do it, because I think it is important that we have a broader general discussion on what the future means and the transition and change. I think it's also important to note that Bermuda will certainly have opportunities inside the artificial intelligence landscape with the cable landing that we are celebrating this week as well.

The Speaker: First supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Mr. Speaker, considering the answer he just gave, would the Premier let us know whether there is an undertaking to have a cross-ministry committee formed as this artificial intelligence will impact all the different ministries in different ways? And if that is the case, whether there will also be an invitation for the Opposition to maybe be part of these different committees?

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, the only space that our system of Government allows the Opposition to take place on these particular matters would be if there is a Parliamentary Committee that is being formed.

On this particular matter, insofar as the work and the research that is going to be done, that is not going to be something that is going to be cross-party. If there is something that happens in regard to seeking feedback thoughts from industry or others, then the Opposition, as a matter of course, from a consultative perspective. But if we are commissioning a report that is being done professionally by an economist, I'm not going to specify how that is going to be done. I'm going to leave it to the professionals to specify how we get it done to make sure we get the best answer.

But as I referred to earlier, we are perfectly happy to work across the aisle on these particular issues. And not just across the aisle, but certainly with the private sector and the third sector on these particular matters because it is important. There is a great age of transition that is happening, and it is important to know that Bermuda is playing an important part and role in that, whether it is a subsea cable landing, whether it's matters related to space. There was a big IPO [initial public offering] today. We have space matters that are taking place here in the country.

The Government came into office in 2017 saying that we would advance our matters and standing on matters related to technology. We are seeing some of that progress beginning to manifest, and we are pleased with that. And we are happy to work across the aisle where it is appropriate.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

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

Mr. Speaker, considering how important an impact this might have on our community, would the Honourable Premier potentially request a Parliamentary Committee to be formed in order for there to be cross the Parliament so that we can look at the importance this subject will have on the future of Bermuda?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to discuss those particular matters. I wouldn't say that right now that would be the clear focus. I think we should probably . . . it's probably a better time to have that done after a board is commissioned and to look at those particular matters.

But as I said, this is a conversation that will continue. And if there are persons who have various thoughts, ideas, or questions, then they are more than welcome to raise them. The Government is engaged on a number of things. I do know that even next week there is a delegation of government employees travelling to a conference in the United States to continue to develop skills and training and development on making sure that we can better use these particular artificial intelligence tools to help and assist the delivery of government services.

I think we all recognise there is space for improvement. And we are going to do our best to make sure we continue to get better.

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm. Thank you.

That concludes the questions from the Opposition Leader.

Premier, you have questions from MP Swan.
MP Swan, would you like to put your question?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: GOOGLE'S SUBSEA CABLES IN BERMUDA

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, my constituents have been talking about the ceremony at Annie's Bay yesterday marking the arrival of Google's subsea cables in Bermuda. Many of them are asking how a project of this scale can be landed here. Could the Honourable Premier share that story with this House and what it means for our Island?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER *[Misleading]*

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I think the Honourable Member may be just misguiding the House and Parliament here, and the public. How we got to this point with the cable was in a Statement many, many, many months ago when it came here, the deal. So why is he asking a repetitive question when it has already come to the House—

An Hon. Member: And today.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —and today?

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It's already in the public domain.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr.—

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Premier—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Premier . . . I'm going to guide your response, meaning that in a normal form of question, if a question was put, the response would have been, it's already in public domain.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would note that there are a number of questions that the Honourable

Member did ask. The answers were clearly in the public domain when asked about matters related to the Bermuda Hospitals Board and other things. But that is fine, Mr. Speaker. Remember, this is Premier's Question [Period], so I will be guided

The Speaker: I know you're guided.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will be guided. I understand. Don't worry. I will make sure the Honourable Members know that I will not take a long time.

And, you know, if there are points of order, hopefully we can get through them very quickly. But I think, Mr. Speaker, what is important to note is that this is a reflection of how you set policy, how you have a goal, and how you have to work through it. It takes a while, and I think that is what's important.

There are a number of things that the Government is engaged in. Economic development, economic diversification is not something that happens overnight. This is something that we realised before we came into office when we said we would set up a structured process for examining economic development opportunities and to find a way to put that forward.

It was the vision of our platform in 2017 to create a technology space at South Side. We, you know, went through a number of various things. But this subsea cable opportunity was identified as something that was important. In 2019, we passed the legislation. In 2020, we passed the regulations. We went out to market and we were looking for partners. And the reality is Google is the first. There are more that will come. But the connectivity that is happening from one of the largest countries in the world is going to have a significant impact on this populace.

So, the Honourable Member can tell his constituents that their children can look forward to better Internet connectivity and a space where Bermuda can play a role in artificial intelligence, influence, et cetera, because the data pipes that are flowing into Bermuda will be significantly more than are flowing into other islands that may be remote, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Premier, now that the project is bearing fruit, give this House a sense of what Google is now saying about Bermuda's role in this project?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note that the ceremony was attended yesterday, even by Members of the Opposition.

I didn't see you there, MP Cannonier, though. That's your stomping grounds, St. David's.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I got you.

But, Mr. Speaker, I think what's important to note is that Google recognises the importance of their investment in Bermuda. The investment itself is significant. And from their particular perspective they said that Bermuda . . . they are actually surprised with how connected it is.

So we had . . . this is the first time we have been able to meet the Vice President of [Google Global Networking], who is responsible for building out the entire Google network. And he said, even on a chart that he showed about our significant Internet rates that are taking place in Bermuda, which have almost doubled in the past two years. And that is just a reality that, whether it's artificial intelligence, whether it's our businesses here, whether it's the traffic, whether it's the work that's happening on disaster recovery and other types of things, that it is significant. And they recognise that as an international financial centre they want to play a part of our technological investment in the future.

The Speaker: Thank you.

You have a second supplementary?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead, MP.

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

Given the current situation, would the Honourable Premier advise of any other benefits this partnership with Google could provide for Bermudians?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important to recognise that in this relationship Google is committed to also helping the third sector. So, there are going to be 500 scholarships that are going to be offered to Bermudians under the Grow with Google programme. Those are matters that are related to cybersecurity, digital analytics, digital marketing. And the Bermuda College is the first institution outside of North America to join in that initiative. So that is certainly something that should be celebrated as a part of this transition.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, Google has partnered with the Bermuda Zoological Society to support STEM education for more than 8,000 Bermudian students every year that will bring new technologies into our classrooms and into the field, helping our young people to become, not just learners, but active environmental stewards for our Island. And that is the benefit of this partnership, Mr. Speaker, something that should be celebrated. I'm sure that

that investment and that partnership is welcome across this entire House.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

Premier, the next Member who has questions for you is MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your questions?

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

Good morning, Members of this Honourable House, and the listening public.

QUESTION 1: CORRECTIONS REFORM: ACCOUNTABILITY AND ACTION

Mr. Robert King: Will the Honourable Premier please explain why, despite repeated inspection findings, operational reviews, and public concerns regarding safety rehabilitation outcomes and institutional culture within the Department of Corrections, Government has not sought the appointment of an independent United Kingdom corrections adjudicator, inspector, or oversight team to monitor implementation of reforms and report publicly on progress?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, in another place, I think the Minister who has responsibility for this has set out the Government's strategy on this. The Opposition may agree or disagree, but that is the strategy the Government is following and progressing against. And the system of government that we have is that accountability mechanisms can happen inside of this parliament.

We've published a report. I think it's important, because governments don't often publish reports that are critical of government work. But the Attorney General, who sits in another place, the Minister responsible, said we want to put it in the open so we can be held accountable for the work that is happening to progress and to make things better.

There is going to be additional investment that is brought to bear, but due to the economic stewardship that this Government has made, we are going to be able to make sure that investment is coming. And Honourable Members will hear about that in the near future. But I think it's important to note that it is in the public domain. We did commission an external review. That review, once and all, has been published outside of the critical security information that was redacted. And we are going to press ahead with that.

And the Honourable Member will have plenty of opportunity when reports are given to ask questions, or parliamentary questions, to see what the status of the implementation is, and to hold through the traditional accountability mechanisms of the legislature which we have in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary, MP?

Mr. Robert King: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that the issues as identified in the report by the UK Home Office highlighted long-standing concerns for over 10 years, it would suggest that government agencies, departments, ministries, staff, et cetera, who were in positions of authority to address the problem, did so to the best of their ability and the situation got worse with those same persons. That is the reason I'm asking for independent oversight and reporting on the findings of the experts, because, as the Premier said, he leaves it to the professionals to make decisions that they are experts in.

So, I'm asking, Is the same consideration being given to the Department of Corrections where the situation has gotten to the point where lives of officers are at risk, lives of staff are at risk, lives of inmates, incarcerated persons, are at risk, where they live, in their homes, in the community? That is the current state that exists in the Department of Corrections. And to suggest that current interventions and practices are achieving the aim is misleading this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier, that was a long question, but—

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm not sure if I got the question, Mr. Speaker. But I will do my best to . . . I'm not sure of the question.

I mean, the Honourable Member clearly has a view. I have stated what the Government's view is. But let me share with the Honourable Member that I actually visited the Westgate Correctional Facility this week. I actually spoke with the Commissioner of Corrections. I actually spoke with the Commissioner of Police. And the matters that are related to security of officers are being taken very seriously. We know that there are matters which we cannot discuss that are before the courts. But these are items that are taken seriously.

But it's not just the Corrections. Because we have made statements, publicly and otherwise, about the work that the Government is doing to protect public officers wherever they are. And so, this is something that is particularly important.

So, I accept and understand the Honourable Member's view. But the important point is that we have laid out our plan and direction. We have made it public. We have admitted where we have come short. And the public and this Honourable House can hold us accountable for delivery on the things that we said we are going to progress.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

What specific measures have been put in place? What actual resources? What strategic plan? What time-lines have been put in place to address these critical concerns? [It is] all well and good to suggest that the people, the personnel, the resources are currently in place. It's not working.

What is the Honourable Premier doing differently to address those concerns, now understanding it's a crisis?

Thank you.

The Speaker: He can get an answer for you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the report was published a few months ago. I'm certain the work is taking place. If the Honourable Member wants [to ask] specific questions, I'm happy for him to either submit it to the person who speaks for Justice in this Honourable House, or for them, their colleagues that sit in the other place, to go ahead and ask those questions directly to the Minister responsible, who I think they did ask those questions when the Minister gave the Statement and tabled the report.

What I will tell the Honourable Member is that this is an important issue. I appreciate his passion, and I sincerely hope [through] the regular accountability mechanisms that exist in the legislature that he'll continue to press on this issue. That is the way that our system of government works. The Government has laid a report. We have said what we are going [to do going] forward, and it is up to this legislature to hold the Executive accountable for delivering on those items.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP King, for yours.

Premier, the next question comes from MP Campbell.

MP Campbell.

QUESTION 1: MIDDLE EAST OR AFRICA CONTRACTS RESULTING IN ECONOMIC BENEFIT TO BERMUDA

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

Mr. Speaker, it was recently reported that the Government has spent approximately half a million dollars on its Middle East and African consultant, Ms. Hefti. I would like to ask the Premier, Other than free digital and leadership training for locals, can the Premier advise of any contracts or agreements that have been signed with any country or entity from the Middle East or Africa that have resulted in an economic benefit to Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will happily state all the things that have taken place. There is certainly the Bermuda Coders Initiative, of which we have seen that that has been seen as a benefit.

We do know that there is the Hope Initiative for global youth empowerment, which has been led by Minister Tinee Furbert. There's a Global Energy [Efficiency] Alliance founding membership, which has been led by Minister Lightbourne. There's a 2024 Partnership Agreement, Government Exchange Experience Programmes, details already provided, which the Government Exchange Leadership Programme as well.

There's at least \$1 million of in-kind technical capacity building based on the figures for the cost of the programme. In addition to that, the engagement inside the Middle East was the thing that brought the Digital Finance Conference here and the work that was taking place, because that came from an investment conference that was taking place inside the United Arab Emirates [UAE]. And so, we have seen the things that have happened there. We know that there are matters that are related to the Arab Fiscal Forum, the heightened recognition that Bermuda has had from the Arab Fiscal Forum, which then translated into a first-ever invite to IMF pre-meetings, where technical officers, and others, were able to engage.

There have been MOUs that have been done with Ghana, the Bermuda Airport Authority, and Dubai [Air Navigation Services]. MOUs on Public Finance Management with the UAE to help and to assist. Amendments to the Double Taxation Agreement with the [Kingdom of] Bahrain to make sure there's additional investment.

Several ongoing and different stages of discussions that are taking place. Bahrain Sovereignty . . . [Bahrain] Data Sovereignty Initiative, Logistics and Connectivity Cooperation Certificate as well. In addition to that, advance—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: You want me to give you answers, do you not?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He has his answers for you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He has got his answers in front of you.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am so happy that the Opposition thinks I know what they are going to ask, and I'm clairvoyant.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I mean, I saw the Honourable Member who asked a question a few hours ago on Front Street, so I'm happy that we're able to engage on—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm happy that we're able to continue on that aspect.

But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we are going to continue to engage. Just like we set up an office in Brussels, just like we have something in the Middle East, just like we have something in America. The next space that the Government of Bermuda will go is to make sure that we have a representative office covering Asia as well, because it's important.

An Hon. Member: CARICOM.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, we're going to get CARICOM as well. That's why.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: But it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognise as this jurisdiction continues to grow in importance and relevance, if we do not do the work to ensure that people know what we are doing to make the relationships, and to go ahead and foster those things, then we will be challenged. And so, our Brussels office representative is doing an amazing job. Our London office representative is doing an amazing job. Our DC Office representative is doing an amazing job. And our Middle East and North Africa and Middle East and Africa representative is doing an amazing job as well.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. That's good news. And long may it continue.

Can the Premier advise how many Bermudians have signed up and received the free digital and/or leadership training?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I don't have those particular numbers off the top of my head. I will see if they are inside of my comments. I do know that the Government's Leadership [Development] Programme enabled 20 Bermuda public officers, providing high-level leadership training at no cost.

It's also involved travel to the UAE and others, things that were here. There was also an accelerator programme that was offered which helped and assisted in the upgrade of the government website, the new website of which we see as well. There were 71 Bermudian educators who participated in the Digital Educator Global Academy and the Digital Skills Upskilling Programme, which is free and available to all.

But on the specific questions, if the Honourable Member wants to submit a specific written question, we can happily get those detailed answers for him, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second supplementary, MP?

Mr. Vance Campbell: No, I don't. I'd like to thank the Premier for his answers.

The Speaker: Okay.

There are only a short few seconds left on the clock, but MP Dill, would you like to put your question?

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

Mr. Speaker, last year, one of my constituents was hit with excessive fees from the bank that were exceeding their credit limit and I believe it was—

Some Hon. Members: Aah.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Unfortunately, the clock has run out on us there. Sorry about that.

For the listening audience, we had 30 minutes for the Premier's Question Period. The Premier's Question Period has now concluded.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We will now start the 60 minutes for the questions that will be generated from today's matters, whether it be written questions or today's Statements. And I'll start by saying that we have quite a few written questions and all required written answers, which means there will be no oral response to any of those questions.

There were some 12 questions which have supplementary questions to them as well, and I'm going to go through the list of 12 and the Members asking can indicate whether they have received their answers.

I have been informed that answers have been supplied to 10 of the 12 questions, and the other two will be forthcoming at the next sitting. So, I'll switch the clock now to the 60 minutes, and then we will go to questions from Statements after that.

But the first written question this morning was from MP DeCouto to the Minister of Finance, and I believe those questions will be supplied at our next sitting, Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Which question specifically, Mr. Speaker? I'm sorry.

The Speaker: MP DeCouto had the questions from . . . there were three questions on the Order Paper. It's on the Order Paper . . . those three questions there. We haven't received a response to those yet. We are assuming they are for the next sitting.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they were sent. They were sent late; I accept that. But they have been sent. So,

I know they have been sent. I saw the copy of the email out for them again, but they have been sent.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: And also, there were questions that were carried over from last week. They were part of that as well.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you for that clarification.

MP DeCouto, your questions . . . we'll get them to you before . . . in the course of the day. They have been forwarded.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, FINANCIAL SERVICES/REPUTATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENTS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please provide for this Honourable House details of any formal economic, financial services, or reputational risk assessment undertaken by the Government regarding Bermuda becoming a Full Member of CARICOM?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please identify for this Honourable House all financial services stakeholders, industry bodies, international business representatives, insurers, reinsurers, and professional organizations formally consulted by the Government regarding Bermuda becoming a Full Member of CARICOM, and provide a summary of any risks, concerns, recommendations, or conditions raised during those consultations?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Given that Bermuda's international business success relies on regulatory certainty, jurisdictional reputation, and confidence from global markets, will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please confirm for this Honourable House whether Government has conducted an assessment comparing the economic benefits of Full CARICOM Membership against any potential impact on Bermuda's existing international business relationships, and if so, will the Minister table that assessment?

The Speaker: The next [questions] are from MP Campbell to the Minister of Housing. And the Minister of Housing has already informed me that they will be forthcoming for next week. Okay? Thank you.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATING HOUSING INITIATIVE BENEFITS

Mr. Vance Campbell: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House any procurement arrangements, construction material supply chains, or housing initiatives that would become newly available under Full CARICOM Membership that are not available under associate membership?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether Government has conducted any analysis demonstrating how Full CARICOM Membership would reduce the cost of construction in Bermuda?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House any specific construction materials that could be expected to become less expensive as a result of Full CARICOM Membership?

The Speaker: The third question is from the Opposition Leader to the Junior Minister of Education.

Opposition Leader, have you received your answers?

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

QUESTIONS: SUCCESSION PLANNING INITIATIVES WITHIN MINISTRY/DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

[Carried over from 29 May 2026]

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide a list of all senior leadership positions within the Ministry of Education and Department of Education for which the substantive holder has announced retirement, resignation, or departure effective during the 2025/26 and 2026/27 academic years, together with the anticipated vacancy date for each position?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide details of all formal succession planning initiatives undertaken within the Ministry of Education and Department of Education from 2020-2026?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide the number of senior education leadership positions filled in an acting capacity with the length of time for each acting officer, from 2020-2026?

The Speaker: The second question is also from the Opposition Leader to the Junior Minister of Education.

You received those answers?

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

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME, QUALIFICATION, PARTNERSHIP IMPROVEMENTS

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please identify and list for this Honourable House all the specific education programmes, qualifications, or institutional partnerships that would become newly available to Bermuda under full membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing CARICOM Associate Membership?

Hon. Ben Smith: For each programme or opportunity identified, will the Junior Minister please state whether Bermuda currently has access through existing regional arrangements, including participation in institutions such as University of West Indies, and if not, what specific barrier full CARICOM membership would remove?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry conducted any analysis demonstrating measurable improvements in student outcomes, access to education, or cost efficiencies as a direct result of full CARICOM membership, and if so, will the Junior Minister table that analysis?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Pearman, you have questions for the Junior Minister.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes. Received, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, LEGAL FRAMEWORKS, DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS, JUDICIAL COOPERATION ARRANGEMENT RISKS

Mr. Scott Pearman: Will the Junior Minister please identify and list any legal frameworks, dispute resolution mechanisms, or judicial cooperation arrangements that would become newly available to Bermuda under full membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing Associate Membership?

Mr. Scott Pearman: For each mechanism identified, will the Junior Minister please state whether Bermuda already has access through existing legal agreements or international conventions, and if not, what barrier full membership would remove?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Will the Junior Minister please confirm whether the Government has conducted any legal analysis outlining the implications, obligations, or risks associated with full CARICOM membership, and will the Junior Minister table that analysis?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP King, you have questions for the Junior Minister.

Mr. Robert King: Received with thanks.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, MEASURABLE BENEFITS FOR CORRECTIONS, REHABILITATION, PRISON MANAGEMENT, PRISON OFFICER SUPPORT PROGRAMMES

Mr. Robert King: Will the Junior Minister please identify for this Honourable House any corrections, rehabilitation, prison management, or prison officer support programmes that would become newly available under Full CARICOM Membership?

Mr. Robert King: Given the recent concerns regarding prison safety and threats against prison officers, will the Junior Minister please explain to this Honourable House how Full CARICOM Membership could offer opportunities to improve conditions within Bermuda's prison system?

Mr. Robert King: Will the Junior Minister please confirm whether the Ministry has identified any measurable correctional benefit that is unavailable today under the Associate CARICOM Membership?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Robinson, you have questions to the Minister of Home Affairs. Have you received yours?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Yes, as indicated. They have circulated, so I'm assuming he would have them.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, DETAILED ANALYSIS DEMONSTRATING REDUCTION IN FOOD COSTS IN BERMUDA

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with a detailed analysis demonstrating how full membership in CARICOM would reduce the cost of food in Bermuda, including specific categories of goods and projected price reductions?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what specific barriers currently prevent Bermuda from importing lower-cost food from CARICOM member states, and how

would full CARICOM membership remove those barriers?

The Speaker: Opposition Whip, questions to the Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport]. We indicated they have been received. Have you—

[No audible response]

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS OF TOURISM MARKETING INITIATIVES, CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES OR REGIONAL BRANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please identify and list for this Honourable House all specific tourism marketing initiatives, cultural exchange programmes, or regional branding opportunities that would become newly available to Bermuda under full membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing Associate Membership?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether for each initiative identified, Bermuda already participates in or has access to similar regional or international tourism platforms, and if not, what barrier full CARICOM membership would remove?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry has conducted any analysis demonstrating potential for increased visitor arrivals, tourism revenue, or cultural sector growth as a direct result of full CARICOM membership, and if so, will the Honourable Minister table that analysis?

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Fahy, likewise, you have questions to the Minister of Economy and Labour. We indicated they have been received.

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

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED BUSINESSES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House all the opportunities that would become newly available to Bermudian small and medium-sized businesses under Full CARICOM Membership that are not currently available today?

Hon. Michael Fahy: For each opportunity identified, will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House what legal, regulatory, or commercial barrier currently prevents a Bermudian business from establishing operations in a CARICOM member state?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House if the Ministry identified any specific sectors in which Bermudian businesses would gain a competitive advantage under Full CARICOM Membership?

The Speaker: Good.

MP Richardson, who is not here, had questions to the Minister of National Security. We have indicated those have been circulated and received.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, IDENTIFY ALL POLICING INITIATIVES AND MEASUREABLE CRIME REDUCTION BENEFITS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Will the Honourable Minister please identify for this Honourable House all policing, intelligence-sharing, gang intervention, and crime reduction initiatives that would become newly available to Bermuda under Full CARICOM Membership and are not already available today?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: For each initiative identified, will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House what measurable reduction in violent crime, gang activity or antisocial behaviour does the Government expect to achieve with Full CARICOM Membership?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry has identified any policing benefit that cannot already be achieved through existing bilateral relationships with the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, or regional law-enforcement partners?

The Speaker: MP Tucker, you have questions to the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. We have indicated they have been received.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP, ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL PROGRAMME EXPANSION

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please outline for this Honourable House how full membership in CARICOM could expand educational, training, and youth mobility opportunities for Bermuda's young people, particularly through regional youth

programmes, scholarships, and skills-development initiatives offered within the Caribbean Community?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House how full CARICOM membership could support Bermuda's long-term planning for our aging population, and whether any comparative analysis has been conducted with non-CARICOM alternatives?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Honourable Minister please outline for this Honourable House how full CARICOM membership could provide access to regional programmes that support vulnerable families, including those facing financial hardship or housing instability?

The Speaker: Thank you.

And MP Linda Smith, your questions to the Minister of Works. We have indicated they have been received.

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes. Thank you.

**QUESTIONS: CARICOM FULL MEMBERSHIP,
ASSESSMENT OF BENEFIT OF ENVIRONMENTAL
PROGRAMMES**

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please identify and list for this Honourable House all specific environmental programmes, climate resilience initiatives, sustainability projects, funding opportunities, or technical assistance that would become newly available to Bermuda under Full Membership in CARICOM that are not currently accessible under Bermuda's existing Associate Membership?

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the Ministry has conducted any assessment demonstrating measurable environmental or financial benefits from Full CARICOM Membership and if so, will the Honourable Minister table that assessment?

Ms. Linda Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether Bermuda is currently excluded from any major CARICOM environmental programme because it is an Associate Member rather than a Full Member?

The Speaker: All received. Thank you, Ministers, for providing the written answers, and Members for indicating they have received them.

That will now take us to the questions [arising] from any Statements that were given this morning. And the first Statement that has indication of questions is the Statement by the Minister of Home Affairs regarding her Statement on the fuel security. And the first question is from MP Linda Smith.

MP Smith.

QUESTION 1: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

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

My question is, Does the Minister have any substantive information which could inform or suggest that Bermuda's fuel supplies for jet fuel, electricity generation and retail fuel or any other petroleum products importation may be at risk, given the Statement this morning?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: No.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: No. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister, the Opposition Whip also would like to put a question to you.

Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was just looking for the page. But the Minister mentioned Government will cover any verified revenue shortfall for licensed importers. And I guess my question is, In light of the past when that shortfall happened, was that shortfall also to be covered with interest as well?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Ministry of Finance led the initiative that actually was also done during the fuel freeze in 2022. And the importers received compensation for what they would have lost had the cost at the pump increased.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But was that cost including interest? That was the question.

The Speaker: Minister, he was just asking as an additional piece to his first question about interest being included.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Just a point of clarification. Would the importers receive additional interest from the Government for . . . added to the cost that they would have been able to receive? I am not clear.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sure, sure, sure, sure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to clarify.

If a business takes a loss within a month and then it is covered six months later by Government, most businesses would incur, or put on a charge of interest because it is a loss of money that should have been in their coffers receiving interest.

And the reason I am asking that is because I recognise even with electricity, when BELCO offered help during COVID-19, the amount of money and loss that they took there, we are paying that money back with interest. So, the precedent is there. I am just trying to qualify if this also applies to the fuel industry as well.

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I appreciate the clarification from the Honourable Member.

This price fuel freeze was agreed with the Ministry of Finance, recognising that there were areas that it could be enhanced this time in support of the fuel importers alongside the communication provided by the Regulatory Authority. The Ministry of Finance has refined that agreement and the period for which the reimbursement will take place to the fuel importers.

So, it is not anticipated that there will be a six-month delay as the question initially presented and suggested, but rather they will be able to be compensated so they do not incur any losses.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary or a new question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I guess I am a bit confused because the question talks about a shortfall, which is a loss. So are we saying that . . . I am trying to understand. It already is a shortfall, which is what was stated in the Statement.

So, is the Minister saying that that shortfall will be paid within that month? We are still not getting to the point. Is it going to be interest? Has the wholesaler, the importer requested . . . let me put it that way. Has the wholesaler who will take a loss requested that interest be paid on any loss that they take, shortfall that they mentioned in their Statement? Maybe that is more clear, clearer. Have they stated that?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The importers are not intended or anticipated to receive or experience a loss. On behalf of the consumer, the Government has capped the cost of fuel at the pump, and so any incurred and verifiable cost for that fuel will be reimbursed to the importers. So, the freeze relates to the consumer, but the difference will be given to the importer.

The Speaker: There are just two supplementaries. Do you want to do a third question . . . a second question, rather?

QUESTION 2: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second question. Yes, that is still not getting to the root of it. Time will pass. I don't know what that time is, if the lapse is a month, two months, three months. But in my experience it is months.

So, with that shortfall, again, this is money that they would have received and been able to invest, whatever the case may be. I am just trying to understand if there is any agreement that, like I said with BELCO, that if that money is paid back by Government, whether or not it incurs any interest on it. That is it. I haven't heard an answer. Yes, no, or we don't know quite yet. Maybe it is that. I am not trying to . . .

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance is going to assist here.

Hon. E. David Burt: I think that the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs, who has answered the question already in stating that we have learned from what we have done. But I think it is important, Mr. Speaker, for Honourable Members to recognise, and for the listening public to recognise, that while in the United States and other places they are facing significant escalation in fuel prices, this Government acted to freeze fuel prices, just like we did in 2022, the last time that there was a fuel price spike. And so, what we have learned from this—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order. Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable Member is not [answering] the specific question at hand. He has gone on about the whole . . . the Statement already states that there are national and international issues with fuel.

All we are asking is, is there going to be interest incurred or expected on the money to be paid back for what they say is a revenue shortfall? I don't want to hear all the rest of that stuff. Answer the question.

The Speaker: I think he was getting there, Member.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no. He wasn't getting there. We already heard that from the Minister in her Statement.

The Speaker: Premier, Premier, can you be a bit more precise for this Member?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I find it absolutely amazing that they don't want to hear the answer.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: The reality is—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait. Wait, wait, wait. Members, Members, Members, Members.

Premier, I think he wants to hear the answer. He just wants to hear it in less words.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, you and I both know that the way that these things are done is you must make sure that appropriate context is provided. And as the Minister of Finance, I want to . . . and I'm going to get there.

The reason why I went back to what we did before is lessons were learned. And the Minister of Home Affairs did say that we have improved the mechanism this time around. And she did say that she does not believe that there is going to be a need for that because the delays that were experienced last time were not. Now, if there is, and there's a conversation to be held with the importers, we will do that. But the Minister of Home Affairs said we've improved the system, and there is not the expectation that that will be necessary.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary still or third question? Supplementary? Third question?

[No audible response]

QUESTION 3: FUEL SECURITY AND NATIONAL ENERGY RISK

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Aah, whew. So, is the Finance Minister, then, in conjunction with the Minister of Home Affairs, admitting that in the past, there was no real loss to the . . . there was no real savings to the public when it came to fuel because the price was held, but it still had to be paid back with interest. So, we just pushed the payback time down the road.

You may have had a stay on the fuel price, but you still had to pay it back, but then you had to pay it back with interest. So, are the Premier and the Home Affairs Minister saying they learned from their lessons before, that they took a loss, plus interest, on what was done before when it came to fuel and staying the price?

An Hon. Member: So, the taxpayer pays anyway.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, the taxpayer is paying—plus.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's not . . . that's true.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes. I thank the Honourable Member for his question, and he's certainly seeking to mislead the House in terms of the framing of the questions. We never suggested that there was an increase, or a greater financial strain to the public. But rather, on behalf of the public in 2022 the Government issued a freeze at the pump. And again in 2020—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I am not misleading anyone. I'm seeking clarity. And the Premier has already gotten up and stated they learned from their lessons.

So, maybe I'll be more specific. What were the specific lessons, financially, that you learned prior to this point?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We're seeking clarity because we're not getting an answer.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He's admitting . . . I'm asking a question about interest, and he's admitting, *Oh, well, we learned our lessons*. He's already admitted.

The Speaker: Okay. I will do two things. I'm going to assist you in . . . That piece was a new introduction of the third question, possibly.

The Minister was on her feet trying to respond to the first question, the question that was on the floor. I will allow that one to go as a supplementary after she responds.

Do you want to continue your answer, and then you can take the . . . ?

No, no.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The Minister will finish answering the question, and then you can ask the second piece as a supplementary there.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: So, as I shared with the Honourable Member, and also this Honourable House, the Government in 2022 issued a fuel freeze at the pump on behalf of the consumers, and again in March of this year another freeze took place which was effective in April of 2026. That

freeze did not incur an additional cost to the public, and any consumers . . . any importers, rather, would have any verifiable cost to import fuel reimbursed by the Government.

The Speaker: Your third question about lessons learned—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: —would you like that now?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering the answer that was just given of lessons learned, How late was it that Government paid the loss back? At what point did they pay that loss back when they froze the prices?

The Speaker: You mean, in what happened in 2022?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes,—

The Speaker: And—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —in 2022 and in 2023.

The Speaker: Well, I'm going to assist again in that that may be something [where] the Minister will have to get the information back to you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's fine. Yes, that's fine.

The Speaker: I don't know if she'll be carrying . . . if the Minister would know that information offhand.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I know the answer.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Because I want to make sure I got it right.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: What is it?

The Speaker: I was trying to help you out . . . I was trying to help you out that time. But . . .

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Okay. I'm assuming we have exhausted the questions at this time.

Minister, that's the end of questions for you on that Statement.

Mr. Robert King: Mr. Speaker, I just have a supplemental question.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: I do.

The Speaker: Put your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Understanding that the Government is seeking to assist the community by offsetting the cost, how much money has been allocated for this relief, or whatever label is going to be used? How much money has been set aside to offset the cost to the consumer?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This price freeze was in conjunction with the Ministry of Finance for a six-month period. The Government and the Ministry, alongside the Ministry of National Security, are continually monitoring the risk that fuel supply has to Bermuda in step with the Regulatory Authority who is the body who is over the fuel sector in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Well, the first question wasn't answered because the question was, How much money has been allocated for this? What was said was not an answer to that question. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is particularly painful, but I'm going to try again. This is not the first time we have done this. There are Statements; there are matters related to this. There is not a question of how much is allocated.

What we are doing is we are reducing the customs duty that is charged, and the price changes on a monthly basis. We are doing it for six months. And when we find out how much that does cost, we will make sure that we bring this to the House. It will be reported. This is the way it was done previously.

Customs duty revenue was predicted to be \$232 million this year. With this reduction, clearly it is not going to make it to \$232 million. It's the exact same thing that happened in 2022. Granted, the Honourable Member was not in the House at that time. It's the exact same thing that happened in 2023. This is nothing new.

But what is important, Mr. Speaker, is the persons who are listening recognise and understand that this Government acted quickly in their interest to ensure that they were protected from price increases at the pump. And if we had not acted, they would have been paying more out of their pockets.

That is what we do, Mr. Speaker. That is the history of this Government taking care of numerous matters in dealing with the people of this country.

The Speaker: All right.
No further supplementaries?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: The time on that question has been exhausted. Everybody has asked their question.

The next Statement that has questions is the Statement by the Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport] on the implication of the rideshare. And the Opposition Whip would you like to put a question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I almost forgot I had a question.

QUESTION 1: RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA, IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Minister, good to hear the Statement about more taxis on the road. It's really, really interesting to see that that's . . . I don't know if it is a direct result of ridesharing, necessarily, but it is good to see.

How long is this process taking to get an actual rideshare on the road itself? What has been the experience with the . . . I think you said there were 19?

[Crosstalk]

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

I note the language used by the Honourable Member from the other side say, *interesting*. I would use a different word to say it's very *impressive*—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I like that.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —that the Government could put—

Hon. E. David Burt: I like that one.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —this system in place and help modernise transportation and . . . and—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —and increase transportation options for tourists and locals alike, especially at a time when we are seeing more visitors come to this country for events that the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport are putting on.

But to answer his question, I would like to also take this opportunity to thank the team that has been working diligently to get this ridesharing across the Island across the line. This team is made up of many technical officers, many stakeholders, Mr. Speaker.

And to answer the question directly as far as how long it has taken, I think the Honourable Member from the other side can do the math quite clearly that we just recently brought this legislation to this place and another place. We also brought the regulations to this place just a couple of weeks ago. And in such a short bit of time, Mr. Speaker, we can see that on Wednesday there were 10 rideshare rides that have happened. Yesterday there were 25 that have happened.

So, we are on our way to increasing transportation options on the Island. So, what it has taken . . . it has only taken a matter of weeks, because we closed registrations on 20 . . . May 14th, I think, Mr. Speaker. And here we are on June 10th, and we have rideshare vehicles on the road. So, I would say the entire process takes no more than two to three weeks, Mr. Speaker, from start to finish.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.
Supplementary?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. *Most impressive*.

[Laughter and desk thumping]

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering that we now have—

The Speaker: Is this a supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay, go ahead. Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second question, sorry.

The Speaker: Second question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sorry. Yes, I started off [saying] *most impressive*, since he loves those flattering words.

I thought it was just interesting, the numbers. I was trying to figure the numbers out, but he clarified them just now. So apparently there are 10. I think to qualify, it is 10 on the road?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'm looking at them. [There are] 10 on the road, did you say?

The Speaker: No, I think that was 10 rides. He referred to the number of rides that were used yesterday and the day before—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: All right.

**QUESTION 2: RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA,
IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE**

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, my question, the second question is, What day or date did we get the first ridesharing on the road?

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

And I appreciate the Honourable Member from the other side asking that question because I was a little disappointed that we did not do more communication around it. So, I'm so happy that I can announce on the floor of the House of Assembly that it was with much joy and excitement, Mr. Speaker, that the first rideshare vehicles did pick up their first passengers on the previously announced date of June 10, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: The 10th?

The Speaker: June 10.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Is there a second supplementary or a new question?

New question?

No more?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'll leave it there.

The Speaker: Okay.

Thank you, Members, for that.

The next Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. MP King would like to put a question to you.

MP [King].

**QUESTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND
FAMILY SERVICES BUILDING CAPACITY
FOR PARENTING**

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

Understanding that 70 per cent of clients required mental health and coping skills, why is Government focusing on parenting certification programmes rather than expanding direct mental health services, family counselling, [and] therapeutic interventions instead?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I read in my Statement.

[Laughter]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, can I read again what was in my Statement? It's not—

The Speaker: Let me . . . let me—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I can't answer that question because that was not in my Statement.

The Speaker: Let me lend some clarification.

Member, your question should be based on what was contained in the Statement.

Mr. Robert King: Correct.

The Speaker: The Minister is saying that was not part of today's Statement, so if you can address—

Mr. Robert King: Okay. What I'll do is I'll rephrase the question, Mr. Speaker.

The point is, in the Statement that the Minister made, it was speaking about parenting certification programmes, the Mirrors programme, et cetera, to address the mental health needs and also the coping skill acquisition as it relates to parenting. What we do know [is] that these are services which would be considered secondary services to primary treatment and intervention for the root causes of those identified problems.

So, the question is really speaking to, Why is the focus, as was stated, on these secondary services versus primary risk need service delivery?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I cannot make sense out of that question. What are we referring to when we are speaking to primary and secondary?

The Speaker: Clarification.

Mr. Robert King: Adverse childhood experiences which will result in conduct disorders which will result in criminal attitudes and beliefs developing. Right? Which will then have impact on memory and learning, education, behaviour, social interaction, et cetera. Potential drug use, mental health issues, et cetera.

So, the very things that the Minister is talking about, that parenting certification, those workshops, that is secondary service delivery that is not going to address the underlying root causes. And what we do know is that there is a serious need for primary services for that population.

The Speaker: I'll just remind you . . . Member, I'll just remind you that you have a training background that allows you to understand maybe different languages than the lay-person understands. So, you may need to make sure you are bringing your question in a format that everybody else, who has not had that professional background, follows.

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

The Department of Child and Family Services conducts a survey to the parents who we support every year. And part of that survey comes back to let us know where they are finding the most difficulty.

And they report that they are having most difficulty with coping strategies, particularly as it relates to behavioural concerns with their children and also mental health concerns. The Department of Child and Family Services has counselling services that they do support families and children, particularly as it relates to coping support and mental health services. But we also support families also with additional private mental health support if that is so indeed needed.

Also, I just want to highlight and thank the Family Centre as well who also provides a free service for families and children for mental health services. So, there are providers out there providing those support systems for our families and our children.

With the parenting programme, Mr. Speaker, it is very important. Very important. Parenting does not come with a handbook. Any parent would know that. And it is a challenging job if you are not getting proper support or education, or support from supportive families or friends or organisations. And so, it is important that we train persons in our community in our services, such as DCFS, to know how to approach these to help parents with this information. And also, through the programme of Mirrors, which runs an excellent programme, because I've been a part of it myself, in providing parenting workshops as well, to help parents to know how to use their language to talk to children, how to support parents through that challenging but also positive time of parenting.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are supports that are out there to support parents. We are thankful for this programme. Our parents need constant and frequent opportunities to support them through their parenting experiences.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

What benchmarks will be utilised to determine whether these programmes are working or not? And who will provide oversight? Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to the specific benchmarks, but I know that Mirrors does an excellent job with collecting data and statistics as it relates to the programming that they put out to our community. So, I did mention in my Statement that the data will be collected, and I am willing to bring forward what those benchmarks come back as when we complete this programme for the year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Further supplementary or new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary and then that'll be it.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: The question is, When is the start date for this programme to roll out? The Minister might have mentioned it, but I didn't record it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

The Parenting Coaching Certification Programme will start in August of 2026 and conclude in 2027. The parenting workshops will start September 2026 and will go through June of 2027.

The Speaker: And that brings a conclusion to questions for your Statement, Minister, thank you, and Member.

The next Statement that has questions this morning [was by] the Minister of Health.

Minister of Health, we have questions on your first, or both of your Statements. But on your first Statement, MP Pearman would like to put a question to you.

MP.

QUESTION 1: EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister of Health for her presentation today and her Statement on the concerns regarding the Ebola virus. And in particular, I thank the Honourable Minister for highlighting the fact that there will now be travel warnings to those who will be travelling to jurisdictions where the outbreak has occurred. And I also thank her for clarifying in her Statement that a process is being developed for how those travellers will return and be monitored. And I think it's important for the public to hear what was said there.

My question is just in relation to those who may be incoming from those same jurisdictions. I didn't hear anything in the Statement about the consideration being given to those incoming travellers. And my question more specifically is, What consideration is the Ministry giving to those incoming travellers in terms of any restrictions that are or will be imposed? Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable and Learned Member for his question. I wish I could say we have never experienced something similar to this before, but we have. So Port Health will operationalise a travel questionnaire similar to the one that was required during COVID-19, so all individuals will be required to provide that information prior to arrival in Bermuda. It is hoped that they will be able to do it electronically.

Those persons who do not have access to electronic smartphones, et cetera, will be provided it upon landing. They will complete it. They will indicate whether or not they have any symptoms, as well as whether they have

returned within the last several weeks from one of the impacted jurisdictions.

In the event that they do indicate that, yes, they have been, and/or, yes, they are exhibiting symptoms, similar to what we did during COVID-19, those persons will be isolated until Port Health officials can come and assess them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, supplementary. I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister of Health for that answer. That is clearly not a bad thing; that's a sensible precaution. One might ask whether or not another more stringent precaution would be to prohibit those people from going through our gateway cities to actually arrive here.

What steps, if any, are being considered around communication from those jurisdictions, US, UK, Canada, about the travellers coming? For example, I'll give an example. Will we know in advance if someone is coming from Congo, Uganda, et cetera, on a British Airways flight from those representatives in the UK in advance of landing? What considerations are being given around that?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you for that question. If I am understanding it clearly, we will not know in advance. We do get the manifest, but of course, the person could be coming directly from the UK, having two weeks prior come from an infected area. So the actual questionnaire is what we will be using to determine whether or not that individual has come from an impacted area.

And then, in addition, with respect to further announcements . . . remember, Bermuda is, fortunately, still ranked low. There's no transmission, and we are still on the low radar. We will continue to monitor the situation through epidemiology and surveillance. If the circumstances change, then we'll do more announcements with respect to our communications with those persons travelling from the UK. But we are at a very low risk.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Same topic, but second question.

In terms of the procedures that you identified that will be adopted if and when we have a patient with Ebola that arrives in Bermuda, can you give us . . . you say it's a low risk, and I would agree with you, it probably is a low

risk. Can you just give us a little bit more clarity around . . . excuse me.

To be specific, in your Statement, you indicated that it would be for the person who was feeling the symptoms to sort of self-regulate. And it would be a questionnaire. Will that questionnaire be reviewed by the Immigration people on arrival?

What's the sort of time frame that you envisage and how that will work practically?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you. The questionnaire is provided to the traveller enroute. Alternatively, if the person does not have access to a smartphone, they will be provided with the questionnaire upon arrival. It will be completed, and again, it's similar to the ones that we had to do during COVID-19. *Where have you travelled in the last "X" number of days? Have you experienced any of the following symptoms, et cetera, et cetera?*

That information is provided when they enter the airport as well as when they enter Customs and Immigration. In fact, we had a meeting last week with Customs, Immigration, and the Ministry of Health and Port Health to remind them of the processes that we will be adopting.

Upon arrival to Bermuda, that information is provided to . . . Who comes first, Customs or Immigration? Whichever one comes first. That information is provided. In the event that—

An Hon. Member: Immigration.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Immigration.

In the event that there is an indication on the questionnaire that says that the person has travelled from one of the impacted areas in the last "X" number of days, and/or alternatively they are experiencing any of the following symptoms, that person will immediately be taken to a . . . I don't want to say holding area, but a private area. Port Health will come and assess that individual to determine whether or not that person needs to have any further isolation, et cetera.

It's a similar process to what we did during COVID-19. It's not our first rodeo. However, again, we are still ranked very, very low with respect to this.

And WHO has just said public health of international concern. They haven't even said that it was anything higher than that. However, notwithstanding that, we are certainly watching the space to ensure that we control our borders as best as possible.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Third question.

The Speaker: —third question.

QUESTION 3: EBOLA VIRUS PRECAUTIONARY GUIDANCE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much for those very helpful and informative answers in relation to incoming passengers.

Going to the Statement and to your travel warning, if I can call it that, travel caution or travel warning, to outgoing Bermudians or residents who are going to be travelling to those areas, how does the Ministry envisage the communications efforts and publication of that warning? Obviously, you have given it today in your Statement in the House. How do you envisage that that will be broadcast to the general public to a greater degree so that people are aware in making their plans?

Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, we will continue ongoing communications. We have actually designated an individual who is working in the Ministry of Health to assist with respect to that because you can appreciate that we do have a population of individuals who live in that region, as well as Bermudians are well-travelled. So, no doubt, Bermudians will be travelling to those regions.

So in addition to the precautions that we've indicated this morning to Honourable Members [and] the public, epidemiology and surveillance along with DCI will continue communications to provide members of the public with information as it relates to, (a) avoiding those areas if possible, but (b) what they should be doing to protect themselves and the community when they return.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I thank the Honourable—

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, supplementary.

I thank the Honourable Minister for that answer. Is any consideration being given to inviting members of the public who are travelling to those areas to pre-notify before they travel so that the Government and the Ministry will be aware at least of a handful of those who do comply with that request? [That] these are potential people to keep an eye on.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I thank the Honourable Member for that suggestion. It may very well be envisioned by epidemiology and surveillance already, but I will bring that to their attention this afternoon. Thank you.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, that brings a close to that Statement. However, your next Statement also has questions from the same MP.

MP Pearman, would you like to put your question regarding the Minister's second Statement?

QUESTION 1: HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister for Health for her presentation to this House this morning on HIV, observing HIV Awareness [and Testing] Month.

You know, a very important reminder that this significant illness which has been with us for many decades and indeed seems to be better managed by the medical community than it was when it first came out or we were made aware of it in the 1980s and 1990s, et cetera. However, it's concerning for the Minister to tell this Honourable House that we have seen four cases over the last four weeks. And that's something I think we can all be concerned about.

My questions again are about publication of this important point. How does the Honourable Minister envisage that this will be communicated more broadly to the public other than by the very helpful and sensible Statement given today?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you for that question, Mr. Speaker.

June is HIV Awareness [and Testing] Month, so in addition to hosting an event on June 1 representing HIV Day, we will continue through the Department of Health to provide public information. We will have pop-ups in Washington Mall and various places throughout the Island to encourage persons to know their HIV status, to remind them that testing is free as well as confidential at the clinic.

The clinic will also be hosting public engagements. We will continue to have a very detailed social media campaign throughout the month of June to provide further awareness to members of the public. We will also continue with radio announcements and the like, as well as publicity through our social media.

So, it's a very, very active campaign for this month, particularly in light of our recent uptick that I've indicated previously. However, the month of June will see heightened activity as it relates to public awareness as well as encouraging members, individuals, to know their status and to avail themselves of the free and confidential testing available at the Hamilton Health Clinic.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Scott Pearman: I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister for that very important response in relation to this issue.

Those of us who are old enough to remember may remember that there was a significant advertising campaign in relation to HIV and testing in the . . . 1990s, I want to say. I know it was on the back of buses, et cetera. Is consideration being given . . . Is the budget available for the Ministry of Health to do that sort of reminder, given the point that we have had four cases over four weeks? Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, those are very good suggestions, and I will take that to the team to see whether that's something that we can include in our health promotion activities. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.
Any further questions?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second question.

The Speaker: Yes. Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: HIV AWARENESS MONTH

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you again to the Honourable Minister for her reminder to the general public and the listening public and this Honourable House that the testing is both free and confidential.

Could the Honourable Minister elaborate slightly on what that would involve for someone who is a member of the public and has concerns in what he or she would have to do to go about obtaining that free and confidential testing at a high level?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, thank you.

I would suggest that [in] the first instances the individual would either present themselves to the Hamilton Clinic. Or, alternatively, call . . . maybe before we finish in the next 15 minutes, I will have an answer with respect to the times that the clinic is open when they do provide the testing. But I would say that the first instance would be for those individuals to just either call the clinic or attend and they can be informed as to the dates. I know it operates on various days, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:00 to 2:00. I don't have that information in front of me, but I would invite members of the public to make those enquiries directly to the clinic.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. I thank the Minister for highlighting this important issue.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, Ministers, that brings us to an end of the Question Period for today and we will now move on with the

Order Paper. And the next item on the Order Paper . . . Minister, you are quick today.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: The Minister . . . Oh, the Premier is up first. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The boss always gets his way.

[Laughter]

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

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy Premier is going to be moving the motion to adjourn for lunch on my behalf because I do have an appointment, so I'd just like to do this right quick before I depart, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that this Honourable House send a letter of condolences to the [family of the] late Mrs. Matilda Caines of [10] Mount Hill [Mews], my constituent and someone, Mr. Speaker, who I have known for basically my entire life. Mrs. Matilda Caines and her late husband who predeceased her in 2017, Kenneth Caines, were the elders at Shiloh Gospel Chapel where I attended as a child, the very first church that I ever attended. And I have known them my entire life. I was blessed to have the ability and privilege to represent her in Parliament. It was always a lovely thing to visit her house. And one thing that she would always do was make sure that I would be filled up with prayer. If I called her for her birthday, there would be a good prayer. She would tell me that she was praying for me. She would tell me that she has me in her thoughts and keeping us in her prayers. And so, it was great.

Mr. Speaker, it was a very poignant experience for me because . . . and I'm grateful that I did actually get to see her in Agape House before she passed and to just express to her directly how grateful I was for the support and guidance which she provided through my entire life. She was one of the figures that I looked up to as a child attending Sunday School dutifully every Sunday for as soon as I could attend.

And the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we have lost a great woman of God, a prayer warrior for this country. And I would like to ask the Honourable House to express, or to send a letter of condolences to her family, her sons, Kenneth and also Troy Caines, as well.

I'd like to associate the Reverend Dr. Emilygail Dill, and also the Honourable Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors with those condolences.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Deputy Premier, I know you jumped pretty quickly just now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know when your boss speaks you must take note.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to . . . I am sure you're familiar with the term of most married couples getting points. Mr. Speaker, I would like to see if I can get a 15-pointer today by sending congratulations to a lady by the name of Joanne De Silva, who just happens to be my wife of 44 years tomorrow.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Tomorrow. All right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, she has been my rock and support not only for 44 years but, in particular, during my sometimes very rough and rocky road during my 20-year political career. So, I would like to give her congratulations for her support but also for . . . you would know, Mr. Speaker, what our wives have to put up with during our political career. So, I certainly wish to congratulate her. And hopefully it's a 15-pointer.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on another matter, I would like to give thanks, it's been just over a year since we have been heavily involved with housing in the country, and with the chance of leaving someone out, I would like to thank a few people for their work, hard work with regard to getting housing produced for the people of this country that is so desperate need.

And those people, Mr. Speaker, would be: Bermuda Housing Corporation; Mr. Paul Martin; Mark Melo; Joy; Keino; Blake; Lakila. And of course, our hard-working chairman, Mr. Chris Famous, and the entire Bermuda Housing Corporation Board. Also, Bermuda Land Management Company CEO Andrew Dias and his board. And of course, MP Dr. Rev. Emilygail [Dill], who has been fighting on behalf of her people. As you know, Mr. Speaker, it's not always been easy, and I would like to thank her.

Mr. Speaker, whilst I'm thanking, I would also like to thank my former Permanent Secretary Andrew Pettit; my current Permanent Secretary, Jeane Nikolai; Hugo Pereira; Julia Marshall; Jane Brett; and Tracey Wilkinson. That's my team at the Ministry, Mr. Speaker. And also, our banking partners Bermuda Commercial Bank and Clarien Bank who have put up the funds to produce these 229 homes, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like to personally thank the Premier, [and] Financial Secretary, Chid Ofoego, who have been instrumental in pressing these housing initiatives forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

We have about three minutes left.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Let's do that three.

Go ahead, MP DeCouto. You've got three minutes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to congratulate Portugal, the Azores, and the Portuguese community in Bermuda for the recent celebration of Portugal Day. And I know that we all would like to acknowledge the contributions of the people of Portuguese descent and that community to the success of Bermuda and the richness of our culture.

I would also like to highlight the arrival of the *[NRP] Sagres*, which has been gracing Front Street with a very large Portuguese flag. It might be as large as some American flags you might see. And I've certainly enjoyed seeing that flag waving.

Speaking of boats, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to, ahead of time, wish luck and safe passage to the competitors in the Newport Bermuda Race. This will be the 100th anniversary of that first race to Bermuda in 1906.

[Desk thumping]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: This year there will be 149 entries, and I wish them all a fast race, with some excitement, but not too much excitement, Mr. Speaker. And I know that when they get here, we will look forward to welcoming them with Bermudian hospitality. And I know they will look forward to enjoying that, Mr. Speaker. So, thank you very much.

The Speaker: Okay, Minister, I'm trying to squeeze you in. Go ahead.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the House if I can take those couple of minutes.

Mr. Speaker, every time we come to the House and give obituary requests or condolences, we have to remember that there are families who are out there that are grieving. And I also would like to just send condolences to the family of Mary Janette Burgess, very . . . a matriarch known in the Hamilton Parish area and condolences to her beloved husband, Norris Burgess, Sr., as well as her children Lovette, Norris, McAlister, Anternette, Dawnette, Norette, Suzette, Juliette, Phillip, and Noreen. I'll associate MP Dill—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —and everyone in the House. I just wanted to share our love and let the family know that we are thinking of them at this time.

I do also want to be associated with the condolences from our Premier with Mama Caines and to her children, Kenneth, Stephen and Troy. Mama Caines was attending also with the family of Open Door Christian Assembly, and she always came to share her love for the Lord. And so, I do want to also give my associations with the comments and condolences.

Mr. Speaker, I also just want to congratulate our Bermuda women's football team as they conquered and defeated the team Belize in a friendly game that they had last week. And this last weekend I had the opportunity to attend a football event. It was a walking football event for persons

over the age of 50. And Coach Curly helps to run that programme. But there are many people in our community who are doing great things and providing opportunities for our people in our community to have the opportunity to do something physical. And so, I want to congratulate him for the time and dedication that he puts in with that.

And lastly, Mr. Speaker, I just also want to congratulate my constituents, Michael and Debra Glasgow, who are celebrating 43 years, [their] wedding anniversary this year. And, you know, as an MP you watch your constituents go through many things. And 43 years is a long time of marriage, you know, with the ups and downs and the dedication and time that's put in. And so, wishing them a happy anniversary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

And I'm going to call on the Deputy Premier. But before I do, Deputy, I'm just going to acknowledge that during the Question Period, the other written questions that were outstanding, the Minister of Housing has provided for us now. So, the Opposition has them. So, all written questions have been received today.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Speaker, I now would like us to adjourn for lunch returning at two o'clock.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

I believe none.

The House will now stand adjourned until 2:00 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:33 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:03 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. I hope you all had a good lunch.

[Gavel]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

[Continuing]

The Speaker: The House is now back in session. And when we broke for lunch, we were in the start of the Congratulatory and Obituary Speeches. Are there any other Members who wish to make a contribution at this time?

MP Lister, I see you on your feet.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead. You have got your three minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you. I will not be too long, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to rise to give congratulations, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, and then the following week at my alma mater, Bermuda Institute had their graduation services for the kindergarten, middle school, and high school. And so, I would like to just send congratulations to all of those, whether they passed from kindergarten into primary school or graduated from the middle school to the high school. I would like to congratulate them.

And a few of the persons who graduated in the graduating class of 2026 from high school, I would just like to recognise a few of them. I will declare my interest. Some are my cousins.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: No, my . . . my votes . . . my cousin, Jasmine Showers, she graduated and also my cousin, Elijah Showers. They both graduated from Bermuda Institute, and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to take some time just to recognise another graduate from Bermuda Institute, young Mr. Knaledge Harford. He . . . he was a recipient of the . . . Last year, in honour of my mother we created the Miranda Lister [Education] Scholarship at Bermuda Institute to recognise students who graduated by representing the values that she instilled in not only just her children, but in every student that she taught. And last year was the first year. This year was the second year. The recipient was young Mr. Knaledge Harford.

And the story goes a bit deeper. Recently, about 2017, 2018, when my mother was teaching at Dellwood Middle School and he was a student there, she taught him. And she saw in him that he had the potential to be better and do better. So, she actually took it upon herself (after speaking with his family and they agreed) to actually pay for him to go to Bermuda Institute. So, for his years at Bermuda Institute, my mother paid for Knaledge to attend. And so, to see that now come to fruition where he has completed his time at Bermuda Institute, graduated . . . And he is looking to go on to become a mechanical engineer. So, again, I wish him all the best in his future endeavours.

And again, congratulate not just him but all these students who graduated from Bermuda Institute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, [it is] with a heavy heart that I rise to offer condolences to the family of the of the late Frederick Hall, Sr., well known to many around Bermuda as “Crazy Horse.” I will associate Members from the East End, constituencies 1 and 3, in particular.

Mr. Hall is first cousin to my mother. His father, Clinton “Ikey” Hall, and my grandmother, Ivy Ruth Hall Anderson, were siblings. And so, I grew up knowing Mr. Hall very well from a young age. And then moving to St. George's and living [in] St. George's, [I] got to know his sons and grandchildren also very well. A well-known sporting family. He was a Wellington Rover and a goalkeeper. His late grandson and his son, Troy, were both national team goalkeepers as well. He was a colourful character without a doubt.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And [I] associate Minister Brother Tyrrell—the [Government] Whip—and the Premier as well.

On a happier note, I would like to recognise the 80th anniversary of Clearview Golf Club in East Canton, Ohio, a pioneer golf club of the Powell family, the late William Powell and his daughter, Renee, and his son, Larry. Renee, I have known for all my golfing life, having followed her as the second African American to play on the LPGA [Ladies Professional Golf Association] Tour. She continues to run the golf club. It is the most celebrated family . . . one of the most celebrated families in the game of golf.

Her father built that golf course in East Canton because in 1946 he was denied access to golf courses, having served in the military. Some White doctors in the area bankrolled him, and he built this golf course. It has become an iconic golf course in America. I was happy to represent my family, my legacy in golf, my family's legacy, and also Bermuda, the Bermuda government golf courses. Mr. Jason Wade made sure that there was representation because there is a connection between Clearview and Oceanview. Both were brain[children] in the 1940s for similar reasons, and they have a close connection. And we look to foster that connection even further.

Relationships are the cornerstone of tourism. And I want to thank Mr. Steven Lambert Jr. [of] the Port Royal Golf Club, for accompanying us on that journey. And thanks to Dr. Jeffrey Sammons, the historian, that made it possible for us to be present.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Mrs. Renee Ming: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She was not as fast as she thought today.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes, I was.
[Laughter]

Mrs. Renee Ming: In the first instance, Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the comments and prayers for the family of Janette Burgess. I know it was done earlier, but I just want to make sure that I am associated with that. The Burgess family is definitely in our thoughts and prayers at this time.

And on a happier note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to give congratulations to some of the schools in my area. St. George's Preparatory School did their annual Heritage Day Parade. And it started at the Sylvia Richardson Care Facility. They went down Barracks Hill (for those of you from St. George's, you will know where that is), onto the square around Ordnance Island, and they headed back to school. And they gave their view of Gombeys, majorettes, [the Royal] Bermuda Regiment, and some topical things as it relates to the Island. The poor children—it was kind of hot that day, but they did their very best. And we are extremely proud of them.

Also, East End Primary School did their spring presentation last week. It was *Annie*. I will associate MP Foggo with it. If you missed it, you missed it because it was an excellent production. I associate Minister Rabain [with that] as well. The children were awesome. Their lines were on point. Their songs were great. It is unfortunate that it will not be held again, but it actually was one of those events that is heartwarming when you get to see our children display so many talents and be able to just highlight who they are. Because in some cases . . . I know I thought Annie was a quiet student at the school, even though she is a Foggo. But she was on point. She knew every single line. She danced 'til her heart was content. And, Lunn, he did a great job.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend congratulations to the All Grads [Rhythm and] Fashion Show. That was held last weekend, and it is the brainchild of Ms. Thompson. She actually hails from the east, but her idea for this was to bring graduates together, all of the 2026 graduates from all the schools. And they did a fashion show. Her hope is that they fostered lifelong friendships with each other and that they maintain that through the rest of their lives. It was held at City Hall. Mr. Fotogenik was the emcee, so you can imagine that there were laughs. But it was actually really awesome to see our children once again doing what it is that they like to do, being passionate about it, and just putting themselves, in some of their cases, out in a space that they would not normally do.

So, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I say thank you very much.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to the House and to the listening public.

Again, I would like to associate myself with the remarks from MP Ming regarding the production of *Annie*. It was second to none, first class in every way, shape, and form. And yes, indeed, she did say Foggos were lead actors and actresses in this play. So, no wonder it was nothing but superb.

Mr. Speaker, the main reason why I got up today is to express condolences regarding the loss of Mr. Ken Pitcher, a former St. Georgian Cup Match player (I would like to associate MP Ming), a St. David's Islander, and cricket player. And he acquitted himself extremely well, both on the Cup Match pitch as well as at Lord's when he had to play.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Excuse me?

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: No, he is St. George's all the way. He is a former neighbour from Old Maid's Lane as well and a former police officer. And I would also like to associate MP Craig Cannonier with these remarks as a fellow St. Georgian and a St. Georgian cricket supporter and a St. David's Island cricket supporter. It would be remiss of me if I did not include him in these condolences as well. So, Ken will be missed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: It would be remiss of me not to include the loss that the police department felt with Ken because even though Ken started as an older police cadet (I think he was a police cadet in his 30s), while on the police force, he made such an impression that he was never forgotten. And Ken did in his last few years living in Bermuda . . . He was also my constituent and very much a supporter because, as I said in the beginning, he was an old neighbour of mine. St. George's will miss him. And so, condolences go out to his family, his sister, nieces, his daughter, and of course his wife, who no longer lives in Bermuda, was here, and has returned home. But she was an ardent, ardent supporter of her husband.

Thank you. Yes.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Any other Member?
Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with deep sadness for me to announce the passing of Ms. Gloria Johnson. Ms. Gloria Johnson was the mother of well-known Progressive Labour Party supporter and life member Ronda Johnson-Trott. And Mr. Speaker, to make matters even more [sombre], when I did speak to Ronda, who is a constituent of mine, on Sunday, she informed me that her brother was in Agape House and he probably would not last much longer, and he ended up dying, passing away the next day. And so, she finds herself mourning both her mother and her brother within one day of each other. And so, I would just like this body to send a letter of condolences to Ms. Trott.

Mr. Speaker, on a happier note, I would like congratulations sent to the cohort (and I know this was spoken about earlier) of the newest graduates from the Mirrors [Emerging Leaders] Programme that passed out Saturday. And I declare my interest because my daughter was one of the graduates.

And, Mr. Speaker, to bring it into perspective for persons within this House who may not know, the Mirrors [Emerging Leaders] Programme is a year-long programme that requires the participants to not only speak to their personal mentors once a week, but they are also required to do various things weekly, various gatherings throughout the year. And it is also this particular year [that] there was an overseas component where they travelled to Singapore for a week to interact with other members of the accredited programme, that is, Mirrors, other young persons from throughout the world.

And so, it was really excellent to see them gather this weekend and get their certificates. And to see the camaraderie between these young people gives me great hope for the leadership of generations to come.

And thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister Darrell.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am going to start on a sombre note and then work my way up to more celebratory matters.

So first, Mr. Speaker, I would like to send condolences to the family and Mr. Erick Taylor on the passing of his son, Mr. Dylan Taylor. Unfortunately, Dylan was only 23 years old when he passed away in a very tragic bike accident a few weeks ago. And his father, Mr. Erick Taylor, is a constituent of mine. And I also knew his late mother, Ms. Tori Baxter Taylor. So, I would like to have condolences sent to that family of this young man who has tragically lost his life on our roads.

And transitioning, Mr. Speaker, to a happier note, I would like to send congratulations. I am not sure if it has been done in here before, but I would like to do it from a formal capacity in my role as Minister responsible for Tourism to Ms. Dee Francis. Those of you would know Ms. Dee Francis worked as the administrator at the Bermuda Hotels Association [BHA] for 45 years, Mr. Speaker. And that is her role. I have associated many Members of this House with her retirement.

Ms. Francis, if you ever walked into the office of BHA, was just a ball of energy and a light. She just lit up the room, whether it was just if you were stopping by to drop something off or if you were stopping by for a formal meeting with the hotel directors and managers. So, it is fitting that the Bermuda Hotels Association is going to be having a retirement celebration for her this evening over at the Hamilton Princess. And I will stop by to share in the celebration of all of the years that she worked and the part that she played in assisting all of us who bring tourism to light in this country.

So, to Ms. Francis, I am sure if she is not listening that someone very close to her will make sure she gets this message. And I want to say on behalf of all of the stakeholders who are a part of tourism in this country . . . I want to say job well done to you, Ms. Dee Francis. And we are better as a country for what she has done in her service in this space over the last 45 years. So, I am sure knowing her that she will enjoy her retirement with her friends and family. And I want to say once again, thank you for your service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Minister . . .

MP Smith, Linda Smith?

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

I actually thought Minister Darrell was going to beat me to the punch, but I wanted to extend congratulations to Nicholas Christopher, who won a Tony Award for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in the musical *Chess*. And maybe we [could] associate the House on that. I know his father, Ed Christopher, is very proud of him. It is a great achievement for a Bermudian, obviously, and it is difficult for anybody to achieve that. So—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: No, he . . . No, he won.

An Hon. Member: No, no.

[Crosstalk]

Ms. Linda Smith: I read it on the news wires. Oh, okay. I am sorry then. I will withdraw that. I read it on several news—

An Hon. Member: Not the nomination?

Ms. Linda Smith: No, not the nomination, but the winning of it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Linda Smith: So, okay, I retract that. I was very excited. But you know what? I am equally as excited that he was nominated, and it is a great honour. So—

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Linda Smith: —congratulations. Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP, Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have congratulatory remarks go to the Daley siblings, both Elijah and Elan Daley. Over the weekend, both hit their qualifying times for [the]

Commonwealth Games to join the siblings of the Harveys, who are also going to be part of the Commonwealth Games. Both of those athletes are also deciding whether they are going to have the ability to actually compete both at Commonwealth Games and at [the] CAC [Central American and Caribbean] Games. The two competitions overlap, one being in Glasgow, Scotland, the other one being in Santo Domingo. So, I know that will be a difficult feat. But congratulations to both of them for the hard work that they have done to make the times that they did over the weekend. Both of them have been in contact with me, excited about the performance, and looking forward to swimming even faster later on this summer. So, congratulations to both of them.

The Speaker: Good.

MP Tyrrell, Mr. [Government] Whip, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Good afternoon, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that congratulations be sent to the primary school in my area, Purvis [Parish School]. Both MP Wilmot and I had the opportunity to attend their school assembly. It was a special assembly where every grade was there. And the reason I am asking for congratulations to be sent to them is that the discipline that I saw from the children from P1 all the way up . . . I think it is P7 they go to. Their behaviour throughout the whole time was nothing but disciplined. They call themselves “students of excellence.” And everyone repeated their mission statement quite easily. So, they are obviously very good students and talented. And I think it made it special, certainly for myself, that at the end of the assembly, the P4s and P7s were released, and I was asked to read to P1 to P3. It was about 10 minutes, and they were attentive the whole time that I was speaking. So, I think there is something special going on at Purvis Primary. And again, I would like to associate the former Education Minister Rabain. Certainly, they are a school of excellence. So again, congratulations to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister Weeks, you have your three minutes, sir.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I would like to be associated with the remarks [for] Ms. Gloria Johnson and her son, Anthony Johnson, affectionately known as “Bootsie.” They were constituents of mine. [The] mom passed, I believe on Monday or Sunday, and Bootsie died the next day. They are constituents, and I heard the Minister for [constituency] 13 say that they were very staunch PLP supporters right until the end. And their daughter and sister, Ronda, is very much a strong supporter of the party and for me as the MP for

[constituency] 16. So, my heart goes out to them and the family in this time of grieving.

I would also like to be associated with one positive note, Mr. Speaker. I heard a Member speak of the Portuguese commander of the ship that is here. They paid a courtesy visit to my office yesterday. We sat down, and we had a pretty good talk. After all the pleasantries were over, we talked football. We talked about the possibility of Portugal winning the [FIFA] World Cup, and the like. I had a pleasant conversation with the commander and his team, and I wish them well.

Thank you.

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

Minister Adams.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to send a hearty congratulations to Ms. Abby Charles, who was recently crowned Miss Arizona for America. Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not know Ms. Abby Charles at all, but I do know her father, Curtis Charles, who works in the department of Works and Engineering. And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you there is no prouder father at the moment of his daughter. He was beaming as he told me of her accomplishments. And I shall associate the House—

The Speaker: Yes, associate the House.

Hon. Jache Adams: —for those congratulations and indeed to him as well as she goes on to compete for Miss for America at the end of August of this year in Las Vegas.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to send a congratulations to Ms. Suzette Harvey and United Dance Productions [UDP] who, over last weekend, put on (I think it was) three showcase events. There was a very special and near and dear five-year-old to me who had some performances, some ballets and taps. And it was a well-attended and really well-executed show. And I think it was the 33rd annual recital for UDP. And certainly, I wish them congratulations and wish them 33 more.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman, you have your three minutes.

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

I am really just standing to be associated with the Honourable Minister, Michael Weeks, who was on the boat last night not only to celebrate [Portugal] Day the day prior but also to partake in the lovely celebration that was given in honour of Portuguese Bermudians and, more specifically, certain Azorean Bermudians. It was nice to see the

Minister there. I believe also Mr. Jache Adams was there, as was former Premier Craig Cannonier, and indeed the Opposition Leader Ben Smith, and myself. If I have missed anyone out of that list, I am sorry. But it was a lovely event.

Portugal obviously has a long history of naval . . . I will not say superiority because obviously I have a little bit of British history in me, but certainly [it is] well regarded as a naval country. And it was extremely impressive to see the quality of this ship last night. And we felt very, very proud to be part of the celebration. We were certainly well taken care of. And the speeches that echoed the importance of the relationship between the Azores and Bermuda and Portugal (more broadly) and Bermuda were heartfelt and moving. So, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to be associated with the comments by the Minister. And as he failed to recognise Minister Adams, I will throw him in the wash too.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, thank you, Mr. Speaker. A job well done by those who organised it, including the Honorary Consul of Portugal, Andrea Moniz DeSouza.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Does] any other Member [wish to speak]? There are none.

We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper this afternoon.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: We are now on the Orders of the Day.

And the first item up today is [Order] No. 2. The second reading of the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Premier.

[Pause]

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

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

BILL

SECOND READING

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY) RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members are requested to now give consideration to the Bill entitled Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026.

The Bill proposes to amend the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Act 2008 to approve an additional five-year period of duty relief in respect of all capital goods for use in capital investment schemes for retail shops.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that the period of customs duty [relief] for retail shops was last extended for a period of five years, effective the 1st of April 2021, and this period of relief expired on the 31st of March 2026. Honourable Members would appreciate the importance of the Government's ongoing commitment to supporting Bermuda's retail sector.

And just to share information with this Honourable House, since this introduction of this relief in April 2008, Bermuda's retail sector has benefited by claiming and receiving \$6.9 million in duty relief in respect of \$13 million worth of goods imported for the renovation and refurbishment of their shops. Even further, five years of duty relief encourages further refurbishment and modernisation and provides investor certainty.

By providing a zero per cent rate on capital goods, the Government lowers the barrier for retailers to upgrade their physical stores and technological infrastructure, and it also furnishes a predictable fiscal environment, allowing businesses to plan and execute large-scale renovation or expansion projects that may require several years to complete.

Moreover, capital development relief encourages job creation and capital investment projects such as shop fitting and construction, directly creating demand for local labour and services, therefore contributing to [the] local economy.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, the history of this was retail shops, just like restaurants, kind of complained. I do not think that is the right word, but [they] pointed out the difference because hotels, which would have retail establishments then, would get duty-free relief because they would get duty relief on their capital goods. And it was just a way of also thinking about levelling the playing field. So that was the genesis of it. It has been going on since 2008, clearly, and we continue to extend it because it is beneficial to the overall economy.

Honourable Members will be aware that locals enjoy shopping online, and as a direct consequence, Bermuda's retailers face robust competition from a myriad of e-tailers. We know that online sales currently make up 21 per cent of all retail transactions, and that number is expected to grow. Maintaining relief on capital investments will help local shops reduce their overheads and allow them to compete more effectively on both price and shopping experience.

The measures of the Bill form part of the Government's continued commitment to supporting Bermuda's retail sector. And over the next five years, this duty concession will have a significant benefit to local brick-and-mortar shops and, by extension, the general economy of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Government intends for the extended period of duty concessions to be deemed to have come into effect on the 1st of April 2026 to provide for an uninterrupted retail shops duty relief for a full five-year period through the 31st of March 2031. And I will comment on further specific measures in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Good afternoon, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Premier for that presentation.

Certainly, we in the [OBA] One Bermuda Alliance support the continuation of this break. The listening public knows that we are firm believers of doing everything possible to support the local economy. Everyone knows when you walk up and down the streets you can see that it is tough for people running a small business, especially a shop. They are competing with people who now can fly overseas having bigger duty breaks. They are competing with online businesses that import to Bermuda.

And it is important for Bermuda that we have a vibrant economy on the street. That, in turn, is beneficial not just for the people owning those shops [but] for the employees who work in those shops. And it creates a more vibrant environment and then enhances our tourism product. Furthermore, it makes Bermuda a more dynamic and

interesting place for those who want to come and work here and to continue to come from overseas and invest and set up their business in Bermuda. So, certainly, we support this Bill for all those reasons.

The Premier did kindly answer the number about how many dollars of relief were taken up. I do not know if he would happen to know how many different businesses took advantage of this opportunity. If he is able to find that in his binder, we certainly would love to know that.

And certainly, we would add and repeat our call that we would like to create further opportunities to make it more feasible to be a retailer in Bermuda. And one example of something that we have called for is how we can move the customs duty processing to be paid after goods are sold. Because anyone in a small business or retail knows cash flow is king—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and that would be a huge thing to assist those businesses. So, we repeat our call to the Government to continue to find ways to support local retailers. And we hope that they will seriously consider ways of allowing retailers to defer customs duty payments until after goods are sold.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I conclude my remarks.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister Hayward, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to weigh in on this Bill today.

As the Minister of Economy and Labour, my job is being responsible for economic growth, economic development, and the expansion of jobs in Bermuda. [It is] also looking to ensure that we expand and diversify our economy in an inclusive and sustainable way.

We set out and we developed an Economic Development Strategy [2023–2027] that has five pillars in it. One of the five strategic priorities within the Economic Development Strategy was the expansion of small and medium-sized enterprises. Small businesses in Bermuda make up over 80 per cent of all business in Bermuda. And so, when we look at what is the cornerstone of our economy, it is small businesses. A large portion of those small businesses are in the retail sector.

Additional to that, when we start to talk about key industries in our economy, retail remains a key industry for the simple fact of the number of Bermudians it actually employs. The number of Bermudians retail actually employs is kind of a direct result of Government's intervention as it pertains to ensuring that we restrict jobs in that particular category as much as we possibly can within that industrial section. But the relief that we are providing today acts as support that we are giving to our retail establishments in Bermuda.

I have since rolled out the National Entrepreneurship Strategy and Implementation Roadmap 2026, which

has a number of goals in it: one being how we create a better regulatory environment to ease the starting up of doing businesses and remove bureaucracy and bottlenecks as much as we can; how we assist entrepreneurs and retailers to acquire financing; also, how we ensure that we create a better ecosystem to allow them to operate. This one measure falls directly in alignment with that.

[At] face value, it just looks like we are providing retailer support. But when you look at the multiplier effect of what is actually being done, we are also stimulating greater levels of development as well because construction activity needs to take place once the renovations actually start. Our construction sector also employs many within our economy, and so that is an important aspect.

We talk about the transition to e-commerce and the competition that our brick and mortars have to navigate. Customers are looking for revitalised experiences when they enter a retail establishment. And as a result of this, measures such as we are doing today will allow for retailers to reduce some of the cost for the development so that they can actually provide better experiences for their customers.

Additional to that, when we start to talk about revitalisation of economic empowerment zones, especially within Bermuda, we want to see more vibrant economic hubs in Bermuda. And we cannot get vibrant hubs if we have a deterioration of physical infrastructure in those particular hubs. And so, this helps to support that.

I know that the Opposition has been calling for relief as it pertains to customs duty. But there is a measure in place where retailers and small business can get a deferment on their customs duty for a period of time. And I think we need to do a better job at educating our business sector of what opportunities actually exist. There are also payroll tax concessions for new establishments as well. And so, I will have those meaningful discussions with the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation to speak to how we can better inform entrepreneurs, small and medium-sized enterprises of all of the work that the Government is doing. But the National Entrepreneurship Strategy will dictate the work that we are doing moving forward. And we have a number of proposals as it pertains to how we can reduce the cost of doing business for our establishments in Bermuda.

So, this is a necessary and appropriate step. It is very much supported by the Ministry of Economy and Labour. And I thank the Premier and Minister of Finance for bringing this Bill today.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Does any other Member . . .

Junior Minister Lister, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I just want to lend my support to this Bill being brought. But first, I would recognise the support from the Opposition, Mr. Speaker. We might not always agree on everything. But when things are simple, straightforward, and benefit the whole of the Island, it is good to know that we can all agree on the same thing.

I want to continue on the same line as the Minister before me, Mr. Speaker, in that when you walk down Reid Street, Front Street, Church Street, all these different streets in Bermuda, you see the effect of this Bill that we are now looking to extend for another five years. You see businesses that are upgrading, improving their facilities, their physical infrastructure. And that has an impact not just appearance-wise, but we look at our tourists. When tourists come here, you know, for so long, there has always been a Bermuda . . . While there is nothing wrong with looking vintage and old-fashioned, we did look outdated sometimes. So, it is good to now see these refreshments, these upgrades being made.

So, when tourists come, it makes Hamilton and whatever other stores take this opportunity up, look alive and freshened up, and welcoming and encouraging for tourists to come in, and not only just the tourists, but local Bermudians. You know, you walk around, you can see that this store . . . And I [will] just take one example, Marks and Spencer's, where recently they put in new windows, bigger windows, so you can see what is in the store. And, you know, it is more inviting, these stores.

So, again, I think it is a benefit appearance-wise to make these businesses be able to upgrade, look fresh and lively. And, again, it has the impact, as the previous Minister before me said, not just on the retail stores but [on] the contractors, the construction workers, who have to come in and do these upgrades and refurbishments, Mr. Speaker. So, there is an overall positive impact for not just the stores but the economy in Bermuda.

And, again, I just want to lend my support to this and encourage and thank the Minister of Finance for bringing this. And we hope to see this passed at a later date, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member make a contribution at this time?

There are none.

Minister of Finance.

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

Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the bipartisan support, the support of the Minister of Economy and Labour, certainly in the work that he is doing to continue to support, and also from the Junior Minister of Justice because the points that he made are well reflected.

I do recognise that there was one question, and a decent question, from MP DeCouto, because it allows us to share how popular this thing is.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: No, it is. It is popular.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is good.

So, MP DeCouto asked, How many businesses have claimed this particular relief? And the answer is, just in the first quarter of this year alone, 22 businesses have claimed for this relief since the 1st of April 2026.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, and what is important to recognise, Mr. Speaker, is this is everything. It will go from beauty salons to barbershops to other things, and so it is important that we recognise that there are a number of things which are happening here. But, you know, 22 businesses that are upgrading in some way, shape, or form their retail establishments and storefronts is positive momentum for the economy. And if the Honourable Member wishes us to report on uptake since the inception of duty relief, I am happy for him to write to the Minister of Finance and the teams at Customs will do their best to get that answer for him.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Speaker.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 2:44 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Retail Shops \(Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments\) Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

At the risk of being ruled out of order, I would just like to serve you notice that as of Tuesday you will not see me in this Honourable House in any other colour but red and blue.

The Chairman: I feel sorry for you. Yes.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, may I move all the clauses?

The Chairman: Yes. It has been moved that all the . . . It has been asked that all the clauses be moved.

Are there any objections?
There are none.

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

Clause 1 provides for the citation of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 7(2)(b)(i) of the Hotels (Temporary Customs Duty Relief) Act 1991 *[sic]* by deleting the reference to the 31st of March 2026 and substituting 31st of March 2031.

And clause 3 deems the Act to have come into force on the 1st of April 2026.

The Chairman: Okay. Yes.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through] 3?

Hon. E. David Burt: And if I may just re-read clause 3?

The Chairman: Hold on. Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I just re-read the submission for clause 2 again?

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Clause 2 amends [section] 7(2)(b)(i) of the Bill to extend the period for granting a temporary customs relief under approved capital investment scheme for a retail shop to the 31st of March 2031.

The Chairman: Yes. Okay. That is better clarification for us.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through to 3?

There are none.
I call on the Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I move that clauses 1 through 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we approve clauses 1, 2, and 3.

Are there any objections?
There are none.
[It is] so moved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 3 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
I move the preamble be approved.

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

Any objections?
There are none.

[It is] so moved.

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

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

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

Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
[It is] so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 2:47 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. Thank you.

We will now move on. The next item on the Order Paper this afternoon is the second reading of the Payroll Tax Amendment [(No. 2)] Act 2026, again in the name of the Minister of Finance.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.
Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House is now the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, which establishes a simplified payroll tax structure for rideshare permit holders.

Mr. Speaker, the introduction of ridesharing services under the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Amendment Act 2026 represents a significant modernisation of Bermuda's transportation sector. As part of this reform, it is essential that the payroll tax system applicable to ridesharing permit holders is clear into that industry. Ridesharing operators are individual service providers whose income is derived from providing ridesharing services directly to passengers through [an] approved dispatching platform. It would therefore be administratively burdensome to require those individuals to register as employers or self-employed persons, file quarterly payroll tax returns, calculate tax base on standard payroll tax bands, and as we have seen certainly when it comes to the taxi industry and/or the minibus industry, difficult to monitor, police, and collect, in some ways.

This Bill establishes a flat annual payroll tax of \$400 payable by the ridesharing permit holder. This fixed amount replaces all employer and employee payroll tax obligations related to ridesharing remuneration and, of course, Mr. Speaker, is the exact same that is charged to taxi drivers on an annual basis. So, there cannot be any question as to whether or not there is a level playing field. The [payment] must be made before [a] ridesharing permit is issued, ensuring clarity and certainty with the permit holder and the Government. This approach aligns with the Government's commitment to creating a modern accessible regulatory framework for ridesharing and ensures that ridesharing permit holders contribute to the tax system while avoiding unnecessary administrative burden.

Mr. Speaker, [it is] important to note we will get into it further in Committee because, of course, there will be a question as [there was] the announcement earlier today that, you know, ridesharing has started. But the brief says you have to pay your bill first. So, how is that actually possible? If that is the case . . . do not worry. We anticipate (see?) like I anticipated your question earlier? I got it.

The transitional provision ensures that persons who received a ridesharing permit immediately before the commencement date of this Act will have a grace period until the 31st of July to make the required payment, avoiding any disruption to the launch of the ridesharing service. Mr. Speaker, this Bill supports a broader transportation reform initiative and ensures the payroll tax system is appropriately aligned for the new ridesharing industry. [It is] another short Bill, Mr. Speaker, but [it is] important that we progress these matters forward. And with that, I welcome the comments of Honourable Members.

The Speaker: Thank you. Premier.

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

MP Cannonier, you are all smiles, would you like to make your contribution now?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, grateful to see some of these synergies that the Premier, I guess, pre-empted in one of the questions that I did propose for this particular Act. And it was good to also listen this morning to the Statement from the actual Minister himself. So, I will save my one other question for when we go into Committee.

The Speaker: No problem.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But it is good to see this. I am glad for the synergies of how we are making this work. I would have thought that since ridesharing is already started we probably should have been doing this beforehand, but here we are. So, with that in mind, that is all I have to say until Committee.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None?

Finance Minister, Premier, would you like to take us into Committee?

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, absolutely, Mr. Speaker.

I recognise the question asked by the Honourable Member. The date has always been set. Sometimes there are priorities from a legislative calendar. And so, the legislation just was not able to be done, but we made sure the transitional provision was there to not delay the ridesharing service but still to make sure that we were able to have it. So, it is a point that was recognised, but that is the reason why that transitional provision is in there, to not delay the initiative, because we certainly wanted to ensure that all of the visitors in our sold-out hotels this weekend and completely sold-out Island were able to get safely to their events, whatever date and time.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 2:52 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL**PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026**

The Chairman: Members, we are in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Payroll Tax Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

Madam Chairman, I would like to ask that we take under consideration all of the clauses.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we take all of the clauses under consideration.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you so very much, Madam Chairman, if I may.

The Chairman: Yes, you may.

Hon. E. David Burt: Clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 inserts section 9BB into the Payroll Tax Act 1995 (special provision for ridesharing permit holders). A ridesharing permit holder shall be required to pay a flat rate of payroll tax per annum of \$400 (as prescribed by clause 3) before the issuance of a ridesharing permit by the Board under the Motor Car Act 1951.

Clause 3 inserts new section 4BB into the Payroll Tax Rates Act 1995 (ridesharing permit holders) to prescribe the flat rate of payroll tax per annum of \$400 payable for the purposes of section 9BB of the Payroll Tax Act 1995.

Clause 4 amends sections 35D and 35G of the Motor Car Act 1951. Paragraph (a) makes a consequential amendment to the Motor Car Act 1951 to specify that payroll tax payable under section 9BB of the Payroll Tax Act 1995 must be paid to the Tax Commissioner before the issuance of a ridesharing permit. Paragraph (b) clarifies in section 35G(1)(a)(ii) of the Motor Car Act 1951 that the Board may suspend a ridesharing permit where satisfied that a ridesharing permit holder is convicted of an offence under the Motor Car Act [1951] or any other enactment in relation to motor cars or road traffic.

Clause 5 provides for the commencement and transitional provisions. Clause 5(1) provides that the Bill shall be deemed to have come into effect on 24 April 2026, the date that the Motor Car (Ridesharing) Amendment Act 2026 came into force. And subsection (2) defines the transitional period as beginning on that date and ending on the date with which this Act receives Assent. Subsection (3) deems ridesharing permits issued during the traditional period to have been validly issued, and to remain valid provided the permit holder pays the payroll tax owing under section 9BB(3) of the Payroll Tax Act 1995 on or before the 31 July 2026. (I think a day where Somerset will celebrate victory.)

An Hon. Member: Yes. That's right.

The Chairman: You are quite hopeful.

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

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

I recognise Member from constituency 12. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, and thank you, [Madam Chairman].

Clause 3, under . . . sorry, yes, [new section] 4BB, where it says \$400 is prescribed as the amount for the purpose of section 9BB. I was just curious. Considering the . . . I believe the flat rate for taxis is \$600. Correct me if I am wrong. I think it is \$600. I was just trying to take into consideration to try and understand exactly how we got to the \$400 flat rate for ridesharing, considering taxi drivers are legally supposed to be on the road for 16 hours a day and the ridesharing is in no comparison to the time frame that they are on the road.

So, considering the amount of time and the rate of this flat rate, how did we come to \$400? I think just logically . . . and there has got to be a reason, but I think logically you would probably say, *Well, if \$600 for the taxi is considering the time that they are on the road, it probably should be a third of that \$600.* But it is not. It is actually \$400, two-thirds. So, I just wanted to know what the formulary was of coming to \$400 as opposed to any other figure. Maybe it was just easy. I don't know.

The Chairman: Thank you.

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

There being none, I call on the Finance Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, this is why you should not ad lib your brief—

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. E. David Burt: —because you will introduce—

The Chairman: You made a mistake. I heard that.

Hon. E. David Burt: —incorrect information.

So, I appreciate the Honourable Member, and I retract that, and I hope that the record will reflect that. It is correct. It is \$400 not \$600, and it is less than taxis, just like the registration fee is less, because they are on the road less. But it was thought to put something there that was equitable. That was the number that was arrived at, and that is the explanation that I have received from the excellent Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport].

The Chairman: Thank you.

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

There are no other Members.

I call on the Minister.

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

I move that clauses 1 through 5 be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 5 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so approved.

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

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

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

[It is] so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 2:58 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Payroll Tax Amendment [No. 2] Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. That brings that matter to a close.

We will now move on to the next item. The next item is the consideration of the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

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

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be now given to the draft Order entitled the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017 together with written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEWOOD BERMUDA) ORDER 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of bringing this [Tourism Investment \(Rosewood Bermuda\) Order 2026](#) before this Honourable House is to enable the grant of tax relief to the developers investing in the tourism product Rosewood Bermuda, TP Holdco Ltd., which is in the national economic interest of Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to invite this Honourable House to take [this] under consideration.

Mr. Speaker, a key element of success in business is investment in the product to ensure it is always fresh and serves to meet the demands of customers that businesses aim to serve. Mr. Speaker, the hospitality business is no different. Destinations, hotels, and attractions that seek to trade only on reputation can often lose their edge, proving to be more of what they were than what they need to be. Success in this aggressive and competitive tourism marketplace demands that every affiliated tourism business consistently stays at the cutting edge.

Mr. Speaker, the Order before this Honourable House represents that kind of investment in a product proposed to be made by a key tourism site in Bermuda. Rosewood Bermuda is an iconic property. Located in the East End of the Island, the current owners have taken the foundation laid by their predecessors and have determined to grow the status of the hotel to meet the true luxury standard befitting its location.

Mr. Speaker, the Rosewood Bermuda property is a mixed-use development inclusive of the Rosewood Bermuda hotel, a beach club, an 18-hole golf course, a club, tennis facilities, and a marina. The hotel comprises of 88 guest rooms and suites, as well as five food and beverage outlets, banquet facilities, a spa, and other fitness facilities. In addition, there are several fractional and whole ownership residential developments which are located in the Tucker's Point master-planned estate, which are neither owned nor part of the hotel.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018, TP Holdco Ltd. invested \$25 million in phase 1 renovations, completely repositioning the guest rooms, common areas, dining outlets, beach club, and clubhouse. Mr. Speaker, the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2020 refers to the 2018 investment made then by TP Holdco Ltd. Mr. Speaker, phase 2

is the \$82,840,000 capital investment, which this Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 refers to, and includes additional hotel improvements, such as a new pickleball and padel courts, new food and beverage venues, and enhancements to the existing hotel amenities, the construction of eight new Rosewood-branded residences, and the replacement and upgrading of equipment, furniture, and fixtures.

Mr. Speaker, TP Holdco Ltd. is aware that the Tourism Investment Act 2017 was amended in 2025 to provide the Minister responsible for Tourism, with the approval of the Minister of Finance, the authority to revoke an existing Tourism Investment Order prior to its expiry. In accordance with this amendment, TP Holdco Ltd. submitted a request to the Minister responsible for Tourism to

1. revoke the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2020, which expires in January of 2028, save for the relief from customs duty, which expired on June 2, 2026; and
2. that the Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 be issued simultaneously.

Mr. Speaker, this request was made such that Rosewood Bermuda hotels experiences no gap in relief, that is, between the revocation of the 2020 Order and the issue of the 2026 Order.

Mr. Speaker, this Honourable House will note that the terms of the 2026 Order are consistent with the Tourism Investment Act 2017 and provide the relief sought for a period of 15 years. That relief is set out in clause 3 of the Order, and again, is consistent with the principal Act.

Mr. Speaker, I draw the attention of this Honourable House to clause 4 of the Order, which sets out the terms and conditions by which the hotel qualifies for the exemption of the employer's share of the payroll tax and the exemption from land tax. Respectively, a management trainee programme for Bermuda is in operation at the hotel, and 70 per cent of its workforce is Bermudian for the relevant land tax exemption period. I hereby advise this Honourable House that for 2024 and 2025, Mr. Speaker, 90 per cent of the persons employed at Rosewood Bermuda were Bermudian, and that the same is projected for the years 2026 through 2029.

Mr. Speaker, TP Holdco Ltd. is committed to investing in Bermuda as a long-term partner. As such, I am pleased to commend this Order for the support, Mr. Speaker, of this Honourable House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister.

I have been accused of being critical of this particular [Order]—

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —but have also been praised by the Government for saying that it seems to be working in some sense. So, after having gone through the [Order] and listening to the Minister speak, I am persuaded that there is some confusion in understanding what we are doing here.

So, Rosewood got concessions and applied to the Minister. They were revoked, those concessions. And then, of course . . . So what I am trying to understand a little better is if, for instance, they come in and they have gotten eight years out of the concessions that normally would have given them, say, 15 years, and it is revoked, and then they come back in again under a new provision and say, *Well, look, we are now going to get 15 years*, we have just added 15 years onto the eight years. And the time has expanded. I am trying to understand that a little better because I understand the nature and the attempt to get this stuff going. But if we are compounding the time and it is expedient business-wise to revoke it before it expires, just then to get more time in the long run, I am not sure if we are defeating ourselves in the attempt of an intent of what we are looking to do.

So, I am hoping that the Minister can clarify that for us so that we understand exactly what is going on here because it does appear to be that in and of itself, they are now being able to extend that time by a substantial amount of years if they have it revoked. So, if the Minister can help us out there, I would appreciate it.

And as far as the eight residences, I was not still quite sure from the [Order] whether or not they were included also in the hotel occupancy pool. [It] did not specify it, so it would be good to know whether or not. I do not think that it is based on the—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sorry? Okay, yes. So on the back of the Schedule, you have the eight residences. So, it was not clear in the [Order] that they were not also a part of the pool for hotel occupancy. So, it would be good to hear from the Minister as to whether that is the case. I do not think it probably is, which is why we are doing clause [3](e), the deferral of landholding, and the like. But if the Minister could clarify that, that would be important.

So outside of that, you know, we have been through these many, many times before, and I appreciate the effort that is being made here to ensure that the hotels can get going. So, I would just ask that the Minister can clarify the compounding of this time, which is a concern of mine, and whether or not it is a part of the actual pool itself. Then we can go into Committee, but I do not think there is much there.

So, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King, are you on your feet? Yes, MP King.

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

Understanding that the purpose of the concessions is to assist the hotel developers and service providers with increasing the number of hotel beds and also creating opportunities for Bermudians to enter the service industry, as part of this concession, I understand that 90 per cent of the workforce is going to be Bermudian. The question I have is, Is there a stipulation that says there has to be ongoing training to ensure that we have Bermudians entering management and upper management positions as opposed to just frontline entry-level positions? Is that part of the concession package as well?

Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a con—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members! Members!

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan, are you on your feet to partake in this?

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

The Speaker: Okay. You have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased when I hear of these concessions coming forward, these Orders, because it is important for the hotel industry to have reinvestment in the product. In particular, you only need to look across the Causeway, which I do every time I pass the airport and look left, and you would see growth that has taken place there at Rosewood. If you look down just to the south of the quarry, you see more development taking place. If you go up to the golf course there, an area I used to practise at now has some very modern pedal courts there to provide a greater product.

And the growth of that particular sport is ever so evident in Bermuda, as other properties are starting to gravitate in that space as well. That bodes well for the industry. You cannot afford to be somewhat stagnant or stale when you see the refurbishment that takes place within properties.

I hasten to add that this particular type of Order that comes before us is not too dissimilar to what I recall not too long ago seeing for Rosedon in Hamilton and the amount of . . . And a historic Rosedon as well that we have seen take place not only for Rosedon in the Pitts Bay Road area, but also for Azura right there on the South Shore in the Paget/Warwick border. I think the former Minister Lawrence Scott's constituency up there in Warwick. We have seen the expansion and the growth that took place there as a result to include that property up there.

We have seen certainly a greater growth take place since we have had the introduction of the restoration of Southampton Princess. Very significant.

I always appreciate the former Premier [and] the Government Whip for finding ways to tickle the Government up and cause the Minister to have to look and maybe answer a question or two. But few would argue that it is a good thing that we have hotel properties looking at ways in which they can further improve their product to stay competitive in an ever-competitive world.

I recently spent a little time again down in Jamaica and have family members, connections, who are in this industry as well and know it is not easy to certainly find ways to make sure that your properties are invested into and the like. They have to do it. They have to do it no matter what country they are in. It could be Jamaica, Barbados, Anguilla, wherever. They are looking at ways, and so are we looking at ways in which we can make sure that it is Rosewood today. It could very well be St. Regis in St. George's tomorrow. And while I am in St. George's, I cannot help but to look across . . . when I go across the Causeway and I look and I look left and I see Rosewood, I only have to look straight ahead and look at the work that is being done with the assistance of these types of Orders at Grotto Bay, a Bermuda-owned property.

And may I encourage more Bermuda ownership in properties in Bermuda? That is something we should be aspiring to in Bermuda and encouraging. There was a time . . . there was a time when there were greater . . . But as times change, folks found more investment in changing those properties from hotel properties to condominium properties where they actually sold.

Mr. Speaker, I have to smile when I do look and I remember when persons were mounting a great challenge towards the redevelopment of the Princess some four or five years ago. Persons who now live in condominiums, what were hotels that I worked in, are leading the charge. I said, *Wait . . . wait . . . wait a minute*. You know, those beds that we used to have at 12,000 and down to three, we have got to get up at least to halfway. You want to maybe use some of these places again for hotel properties? You know, that took place. That took place in great number.

I am old enough to remember when the Condominium Act [1986] first came to Parliament. I was not in Parliament then, but I ran. It was around 1982, '83, '81, '82, '83 when the Condominium Act [1986] came and the Timeshare [(Licensing and Control)] Act [1981] got introduced around 1980, Mr. Speaker. And all these things factor in because nothing remains exactly the same. They do not. You have to evolve. We have seen the evolution of the Timeshare [(Licensing and Control)] Act [1981]. While I am down in St. George's where the timeshare lives and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You all right? Okay.

Now where timeshare lives and breathes, we have seen the rejuvenation of the St. George's Club Hotel. I tell people. I told a visitor. I said: *Listen. Let me share this with*

you. St. George's per capita has more of everything that Bermuda has to offer. And has per capita the best of what Bermuda has to offer. Three, three—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And yes, thank you.

I mean, you know, it was not without . . . It was not . . . You know what is funny? I listened to the Honourable Member saying thank you. Things were not without controversy. But when this Government came into power in 2017, we took those controversies and we worked with them like a responsible government would.

An Hon. Member: Exactly.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: We were not the only government in Bermuda history that reversed the contract that a previous government did. And maybe that Member can speak and elaborate on that at some point in time. But I remember, so yes, we have embraced what we have had, what the previous Government did and worked with enhancing that.

And I am proud because I came to St. George's in a bygone era to open a very important hotel product, a golf course, in 1985. Right? And I have been in St. George's ever since. But I can say this, that we have the St. Regis Hotel. We have the former Aunt Nea's Inn [at Hillcrest], [a] boutique hotel, one of the most beautiful examples of Bermuda ownership of a hotel property in Bermuda in St. George's. We have the St. George's Club Hotel. We have in St. George's Parish . . . we have the Grotto Bay. We also have the Rosewood in St. George's Parish and parts of Mid Ocean Club in St. George's Parish. And pretty soon, we might just claim that little bit of The Loren for St. George's, too, because I think, if I look at the old maps, that was part of St. George's as well. So, everything you need to have is right down there in the glorious east. And soon the Cup will be too.

The Speaker: Except for the Cup. Except for the Cup.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And soon the Cup will be too.

The Speaker: No, no. That won't join you.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I am very pleased the glass is half full for tourism. The glass is half full. And that is because there are persons out there looking at ways to reinvest in the properties that exist and looking to invest in the properties that remain dormant for quite some time. Elbow Beach and one of my favourites I am looking to see something happen in (and I am throwing it out there), two of them actually, [are] Lantana and Sonesta, family-connected properties just like the Princess too. Oh yes. Lantana, just like Mid Ocean was at one point in time too . . . So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say thank you for the growth.

And I just will end with this. I returned home on Wednesday to a full United Airlines flight out of Newark where, when I walked to the Bermuda line, I walked right up to the counter.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I walked right up to the counter. When I looked over there, I said, *Well, maybe I should stand in back and let the tourists get through and spend a little bit of money a little bit earlier.* I will throw that out there . . . bringing so many tourists to the Island this month. And I saw a few carnival folk[s] in there too. I saw a few carnival—

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I saw a few carnival . . . And not to profile, but you know,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —there are good shapes.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well, they are!

But I just wanted to say that in the spirit of heroes, and this is an important holiday weekend for me, for tourism. Because, you know, I come from a family of golfers and sailors. And I will be on the water following the Comet Race. But I am here to say that the younger generation does not follow these Comets the way we did when I was a younger fellow. And even [the] former Opposition Leader and leader of our party L. Frederick Wade used to be out there on that Comet Race. Who was he out there with, Mr. Speaker? He was out there on the *Mistress*. Who . . . who . . . who were the three people of great prominence in Bermuda on [National] Heroes Day celebrating, following the Comet Race? I would encourage more Members to come out before they go [to] carnival, get a boat, come out there, and follow the Comet Races.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes. *Riches* [was] owned by my good friend Colin Pearman, the late Sir John Swan, and L. Frederick Wade. They were out on the water every year following the Comet Races and being part of the many that were out there every year.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Hotel.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you for—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: We cannot be discussing . . . We cannot be discussing . . . We cannot be discussing

hotels, concessions in Bermuda, and not [appreciate] the reason why people come to Bermuda in the first place. The relationships that were formed by Bermudians extended . . . And the Member who asked me that should know that the relationships through music, the relationships through sport, the relationships through families, and the input that Bermudians put into that have a big part in why these hotels can get these concessions. So let them not forget how important it is to invest in the Bermuda product. Let us not forget how important it is to have entertainment.

And let me say this.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And let me say this. That I want to just single out a Bermudian entrepreneur down there who I am sure, because this Government has extended concessions not only to hotels, Minister.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: They go to amenities also, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is right. And Mr. Danny O'Connor down there with Beach Boys and the like putting on some great events and stuff. Let me say the good things that I see happening up in Snorkel Park, which is a little bit . . . We take the ferry, but we need more ferries to bring them up from St. George's there. Let me just say that I appreciate this concession Order.

The Speaker: Where still on the development order right?

[Crosstalk and laughter]

The Speaker: [Would] anybody else would like to make a contribution? None?

Minister, it is you, Minister.

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

And I want to say thank you to the contributions of the Honourable Member from constituency 2, I tell you. We all know of his long-standing history with the tourism industry here in Bermuda. And he is (I will remind people) one of the hard-working directors of the Bermuda Tourism Authority.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we know, the Bermuda Tourism Authority does sales and marketing. And this, the investment in properties, is what the Government does so very well, and we will continue to do, Mr. Speaker. So, with that said, I would like to get . . . and answer some of the questions that were asked from the other Honourable Members of this House.

So, the first one was a bit of a clarification as to why the current Order is being revoked, which one creates in adding another 15 years. Well, first, I would like to say that

the first one that they were operating under was actually a 10-year time frame. So, I will start there. And the amendments to the Tourism Investment Act [2017] applied to any new application, i.e., tax relief, has been extended from 10 to 15 years. And this expanded provision allows Bermuda to be more competitive with our neighbours from the south—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: No, it is not added on at all. So, what happens is we have got to stay, as I said in my Statement, competitive.

So, the question is, Why the construction of the eight residences? The original 2020 Order did not include the construction of the eight residences. I think that was your question there. The eight residences are required to be part of the hotel inventory for six months out of the year. So, that is one of the requirements. And they are, therefore, part of the hotel concession relief because of that requirement.

Second, what levels are covered as part of the Management Training programme? This was a question from the Honourable Member King. The Management Training programme covers all levels from lower to middle and upper management levels.

So, with that, I think I have answered the questions that have come from the other side. And, again, to reiterate what my colleague has said, this is part of the greater investment that the Government has said they were going to make and they continue to show, whether it comes to restaurants, whether it comes to attractions and hotels, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, with that, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that a suitable message be sent to His Excellency, the Governor.

The Speaker: Any objections?

The necessary documents will be sent at the appropriate time.

[Motion carried: The Draft Order entitled Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026 was approved.]

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

The Speaker: That brings us to a close of that.

The next item on the order paper, [Order] No. 5, has been carried over.

[Order] No. 6, the second reading of the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs.

Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 be now read for a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present for the consideration of this Honourable House the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026. This Bill amends the Electricity Act 2016 to strengthen Bermuda's energy planning framework, to provide a statutory process for the suspension and reconstitution of the Integrated Resource Plan where the public's interest requires it, and to make consumer affordability protections an expressed requirement of the Integrated Resource Plan.

Mr. Speaker, electricity is woven into every Bermudian life. It keeps the lights on for the senior in Somerset, the refrigerator running for the family in Pembroke, and the doors open for the small business in St. George's. When the cost of power rises, the increase impacts what we can do at the kitchen table and the corner shop, and the monthly budget of every household on this Island.

This Government was elected in 2025 on a mandate of equity and tangible progress. The price, the reliability, and the fairness of electricity sits at the centre of that mandate. Mr. Speaker, the world has reminded us repeatedly and most recently what energy insecurity costs. The war in Ukraine drove fuel prices to historic highs and pushed households across the world into an energy crisis. Attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea disrupted the routes on which traded fuels depend. Tensions in the Middle East move oil markets within hours. Bermuda imports virtually every drop of fuel we burn to generate electricity. Each of these shocks crosses the ocean and arrives through the fuel adjustment on every bill in Bermudian households. We lived through this in 2022 and 2023 when global fuel volatility drove electricity costs sharply upward, and our families carried the burden. For an Island of 21 square miles, more than 600 miles from the nearest coastline, energy security is a national security.

Mr. Speaker, the countries that get their energy transition right gain far more than cleaner power. They stabilise rates and give households and businesses the certainty to plan and to invest. They build local skills, attract capital, and harden their grids against storms that grow stronger and stronger each season. They convert vulnerability into resilience and dependence into self-determination. That is a prize to be won through deliberate planning conducted in the public interest under democratic accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Resource Plan, commonly referred to as the IRP, is the principal tool used to guide Bermuda's electricity future. It informs decisions on generation, renewable energy, system reliability and long-term energy costs. It is the framework through which Bermuda's energy transition is planned, sequenced, and costed. A sound IRP is the difference between a transition that lowers bills and one that [raises] them.

Successive Governments have made promises to the people of Bermuda about their energy future. And in 2015, the National Electricity Sector Policy set a target of 35 per cent renewable generation by 2035 and laid the foundation for the Electricity Act 2016. In 2019, the Regulatory Authority approved the Integrated Resource Plan that charted an accelerated course towards approximately 85 per cent renewable generation by 2035.

In 2021, [in] the Speech from the Throne, the Government committed to regulations addressing the cost of fuel surcharges for the electricity and to bring legislation enabling renewable energy developers to test their technologies in Bermuda.

In the 2023 Speech from the Throne, delivered weeks after a 20 per cent increase in electricity fees, the Government committed to advance amendments to the regulatory legislation and the Electricity Act 2016 to provide for greater public protections in price determination and implementation. And in the 2025 Speech from the Throne, the Government committed to limit the categories of recoverable expenses that may be passed on to consumers to empower the Regulatory Authority to implement fair pricing on retail electricity tariffs and to review the requirement for mandatory connection to the grid.

Mr. Speaker, it is accepted that there has been no comprehensive refresh of the National Electricity Sector Policy since 2015. Because this is accepted, it is equally met with the determination that it is always the right time to set the path on track.

This year, the Government advanced that work through the National Electricity Sector Policy 2026, which now, having completed consultation, includes clearly and publicly the policy position on the electricity sector: affordability, equity, reliability, and least-cost planning. The question that this Bill invites and is presented before Honourable Members through the amendment is whether the planning in its current machinery of the sector can deliver that policy. The promises of 2021, 2023, and 2025 cannot be made true through the current Integrated Resource Plan process built on the assumptions of another era and misaligned with the policy of the elected Government.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may ask why we have been unable to deliver. Part of this answer lies in the architecture itself. Under the current framework, the Integrated Resource Plan is authored by the utility. We know that the utility is a commercial enterprise who answers lawfully to its shareholders and plans accordingly to its commercial interests. The Regulatory Authority then refines what the utility submits in consultation with the Government's policy. And the Government, which promised the

people relief and better standard of living, holds the responsibility without the statutory means. [That means] three entities, three different objectives, one bill at the end of the month paid by Bermudians.

It should be declared that none of these institutions have acted improperly. The structure itself produced the misalignment, and this Bill corrects it by ensuring that regulatory accountability also considers the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members should also understand what planning machinery costs the people that it serves. The Regulatory Authority, funded by its regulatory fees from the sector, in its own budget published (for 2025/26) an increase of 52 per cent on the prior year. With nearly \$1.6 million allocated to the consulting services in support of the work that includes the development of the IRP. The regulatory fee charged on every kilowatt hour sold has risen from 0.545 cents to 0.855 cents. And the utility may recover it through a dedicated charge on the bill. On the other side of the ledger, the utility's own cost in preparing its IRP proposal, including external consultants and modelling, sits within the regulatory cost base on which tariffs are built. Every dollar of planning on both sides is ultimately paid by the ratepayer.

The analysis underpinning the first IRP estimated that a two-year delay in needed generation could have cost ratepayers \$78.8 million in temporary power alone. A poorly constructed plan locks in generation choices, fuel exposure, and capital commitments for decades. And every misjudgement is paid for month after month on a household bill.

Mr. Speaker, now consider the time. Bermuda's first IRP moved from the utility's proposal in February 2018 to an approved plan in 2019, a cycle roughly of 18 months. The current cycle does tell a different story. The Regulatory Authority requested the proposal from the utility in October 2022. And the deadline for that proposal was extended with ministerial consent to November 2023. The proposal arrived in May 2024. Public consultation was still being extended into September 2025.

When I was appointed into this office in February 2025, more than two years into the cycle, there was not an approved plan. And there is not one today. This Bill is not a sudden shift, but it addresses a process that was already delayed, already out of date and already detached from the promises successive Governments have made to the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, without a pause this Government is denied the means to deliver on its promises. And that is the operational truth this Bill solves. Some have suggested that more money should be spent to finalise and then seek to amend the future IRP. I weighed that argument. But, spending further resources to complete a plan that is misaligned with the Government's stated policy, considers the expansion of technology and studies at the expense of the rate payer towards a confined time frame of 2035—and that timetable would be unfair—runs contrary to affordability and does not serve the public interest.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, the Bill will make the following amendments. It would define the Integrated

Resource Planning process as a process by which the Integrated Resource Plan is requested, submitted, and considered for approval under the Electricity Act 2016. It will insert a new public interest power, enabling the Minister, after consultation and where the statutory test is met, to make an order for the suspension and reconstitution of all or part of the IRP process. It will require the Regulatory Authority and the transmission, distribution, and retail licensee to consider consumer affordability in the integrated resource planning and decision making to ensure that affordability protections form an integral part of the Integrated Resource Plan.

It will provide for the resumption and approval of an Integrated Resource Plan following any suspension and reconstitution of that process. It will amend the Regulatory Authority Act 2011 to recognise that the Minister may have public interest powers in respect of a regulated industry sector where those powers are specified in the Act or sectoral legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it allows the Minister after consulting the Regulatory Authority and the TD&R [Transmission, Distribution and Retail] licensee to make an order to suspend and reconstitute any part of the IRP process but only where the statutory test is met. That test requires the Minister to be satisfied that the continuation of the IRP process would pose a risk to the reliability, sustainability, or affordability of energy supply or that action is necessary to ensure consistency between the Government policy and the proposed Integrated Resource Plan. The Minister must be of the opinion that continuing the process would be contrary to the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, because this power is significant, the Bill includes important safeguards. An IRP suspension order must state the reasons for the order, the period of the suspension, the part or parts of the IRP process that must be constituted, and any directions necessary for the Regulatory Authority to give. The order will be subject to negative resolution procedure, and the period of suspension cannot exceed two years. Before the suspension expires, the Regulatory Authority must issue a notice setting out the IRP process and when it will resume, which parts of the process have been reconstituted, the next steps taken, and any guidance related to that resumption.

The Bill provides for a right of appeal to the Supreme Court for the TD&R licensee or any other person aggrieved by the making of an IRP suspension order. Mr. Speaker, some will suggest this is statutory ministerial interference, but this Bill actually builds a clear national policy, a cohesive planning process answerable to that policy, and a legislative framework that defines specific circumstances in which a Minister may act.

Good governance, Mr. Speaker, is not the absence of ministerial responsibility but rather responsibility exercised through law in the open within limits set by this honourable legislature. A Ministerial Directive on accountability, Mr. Speaker, was issued last year and was not materially integrated into any resource planning. Therefore, it invites the importance of this power tailored to its purpose.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill right sizes the planning process. It is tabled because of today's circumstances, but it is built to outlast them. It will be available to this administration and to every future and hopeful administration that carries a mandate for the Bermudian people so that the elected Government of the day can steer the energy sector in the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, from the commencement of this Act, the pace and direction of Bermuda's energy transition will be advanced by single alignment with the policies of the Government that the people chose. It will consider and include our people: the household installing rooftop solar, the renter who depends entirely on the grid, the senior on a fixed income, and the small business watching its operational costs. Their interest expressed through the democratic mandate will set the standard against every plan and is tested on affordability, reliability, and fairness.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill opens the next phase of Bermuda's energy reform. In the months ahead, the Government will continue the consultation on amendments that strengthen the Regulatory Authority's ability to ensure fairer retail electricity pricing and greater accountability within the sector. This includes reviewing the categories and expenses that may be properly passed on to consumers and ensures that efficiency or imprudent expenditure cannot simply become a burden carried by Bermudian ratepayers. The people of Bermuda expected a system that rewards efficiency, innovation, and responsible planning. They should never bear unnecessary costs without critique.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will also improve the coordination between the Department of Energy, the Department of Planning, and the Regulatory Authority so that Bermuda can properly forecast, monitor, and manage the growth of distributed generation across the Island while protecting grid stability, systems reliability, and consumer affordability. Bermudians are already investing in rooftop solar, battery storage, and cleaner technologies, and our regulatory systems must evolve with them.

Mr. Speaker, the Government further intends to explore other amendments in the future relating to energy adoption for a more diverse energy future that can be examined responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, all of this work will proceed and all energy programmes of stakeholder engagement and development . . . household installers, the utility, independent producers, the Regulatory Authority, environmental organisations, and the business community will each have a seat in this transition. The Government will weigh the contributions against a single measure, what serves Bermuda and its people.

The people of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, expect an electricity system that is sustainable and decision-making that is affordable and fair. The Government rejects the narrative that Bermuda is too small to modernise its energy system or too limited to pursue greater energy resilience. Affordability and sustainability are connected objectives, and every reform we advance is rooted in one principle, that

Bermuda's energy future must serve Bermuda and its people first.

Mr. Speaker, brick by brick, reform by reform, this Government is building a modern energy framework that is more accountable, more sustainable, more consumer focused, and more resilient to the global pressures that increasingly test island nations. This work will take time, and the direction is clear. We are building an energy future that Bermuda's next generation will inherit with confidence. This Bill is a practical and necessary step in that work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Robinson, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to my colleagues and the listening audience.

First of all, I would like to commend the Minister on being open for dialogue prior to this tabling and also open to questions. So, I just want the public to know that she did endeavour to make that link and that there is collaboration there, and I think that should be celebrated.

I understand through discussions and reading and listening to the Minister's brief that the intention of this amendment is in a good place. The intentions of it to work towards affordability for Bermudians is something that we would support on this side. However, there do seem to be a few unintended consequences in this legislation that I would like to highlight to the Minister and to the listening public.

What is concerning to me is that this particular legislation, or amendment that has come forward, seems to allude to the fact that somehow the IRP proposal has put Government and experts on seemingly . . . I do not want to say opposing sides, but [there] seem to be differences there in the way forward when all three parties should be weighing in on this IRP process from beginning to end. So, I would like to ask the Minister how the difference formed to such an extent to where this amendment seemed to be necessary in order to course correct the IRP in her interest . . . well in her Statement as the public interest to correct this IRP. So, I want to know how that divide seems to have come between the experts, what they have suggested, and Government's particular mandate.

Affordability is already enshrined in the current Electricity Act 2016. It is under the purpose of the Act. It already lists things like innovation and affordability. So, seeing in this amendment that it has created a section that says "in the interest of affordability," seems a bit like a duplication of efforts. So, I am wondering. Does the Minister not feel that the current Electricity Act 2016 which enshrines affordability has yielded suitable results that has led to, now, what seems like a secondary layer on top of an independent body and a Regulatory Authority?

The Minister also has the ability in the current Electricity Act 2016 to make Ministerial declarations and give

Ministerial directions. So again, I wonder if this is a duplication of abilities. And what is the difference between the Ministerial order, which in this amendment is stated to be different than that of Ministerial directions and Ministerial declarations that already exist in the Electricity Act [2016]?

The Minister did mention in her brief that some may say that this is ministerial interference. I would be one of those "some people." I believe that this is, in my humble opinion, a ministerial overreach though with good intentions. Again, I support things that will make Bermuda affordable for Bermudians. And I think everybody who goes anywhere will hear their constituents, aunts, uncles, families, [and] spouses complaining about their BELCO bill and the cost of energy in this Island. And I think that is the price of being remote and disconnected from most things.

I think there is not anybody who would argue against lower electricity and energy bills. However, this particular amendment may cause the opposite effect because as this is currently, this entire process is paid for by the rate payer. These potential suspensions could indeed lead to higher bills due to spooking investors, due to giving the illusion that the Regulatory Authority may not be as separated from Government's reach as it should be. And that sort of fear will translate into folks being potentially (because I cannot read the future, but potentially) less willing to invest in infrastructure where ministerial overreach tends to give certain folks the illusion of kickbacks, or not fair assessments of investment. And that is something that we cannot afford, especially with this important sector.

And let me clarify, *illusion* of kickbacks. I am not accusing the Minister of giving kickbacks. I am just saying that when you have investors who believe that Government is playing a larger role in an independent regulatory body, those sorts of things can come up, where folks feel like the independent body may not be as independent as we would like it to be. So, I think we have to avoid anything that may give that impression, not just locally but internationally as well for our credibility as a jurisdiction.

The Integrated Resource Plan is stringently laid out in the Electricity Act [2016], and I have a few concerns on amending that IRP process. Number one [is] the ability to suspend and reconstitute the IRP process. I wonder if this was subject to consultation from the Regulatory Authority on how that may impact the implementation of our Integrated Resource Plan, how that may affect our long-term energy sustainability and also consultation with the energy supplier, how investors or investment may take to this particular amendment, and whether or not Bermudians are being safeguarded from any potential fallout of this amendment when it comes to their energy affordability, sustainability, and reliability.

A lot of us do have complaints about BELCO and the cost. But the reliability of our grid is extremely high. I believe it was quoted to me [as] over 90 per cent. So, we cannot unintentionally jeopardise that for future generations in our bid as legislators to bring about our platform, our mandates, and our plans. There is a reason why this separation of Government and the Regulatory Authority was

made because not always do Government's intentions align with the sustainability and future planning of the jurisdiction.

We are temporary. We are not forever. And experts [who] live, eat, and breathe this, are planning years in advance to be able to keep Bermuda competitive and reliable and our energy supply undisrupted. So if the IRP proposal was vetted by experts in BELCO, vetted by experts within the RA, and I have been told vetted by the University of Edinburgh, why now, after potentially seven years (but correct me if I am wrong) do we now want to come forward seven years later and potentially put a pause on a process that has been running . . . that has cost numerous amounts of funds to the ratepayer? And what is going to be the fallout of that?

So, I have a few questions here.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: What is the estimated cost of this suspension, potential suspension? Because delays have cost. I would like to know what analysis was done on the potential cost of the suspension on the Bermudian public and if there is an estimated amount. Has an analysis been done on the potential impact on Bermudian bills?

How would a suspension affect our progress on our investment and future energy sustainability?

Does the Minister anticipate legal disputes to result from a potential suspension or reconstitution of the IRP?

I recommend that the Minister utilise the powers that are already granted under the Electricity Act [2016] because right now what we are weighing is affordability versus reliability. And as politicians, I think both sides, we like to get up and say that we want to make things affordable and cheaper for Bermudians. And I think that is a just cause. And I think most times we are aligned on that, maybe not the road to get there, but we are aligned on that as a goal. However, we cannot allow our pursuit of this and our policies to jeopardise future reliability and sustainability of our energy grid.

There are some things that can be done. Land can be earmarked. I believe that that has been an issue after talking to a few experts of being able to have land earmarked to utilise solar, to utilise wind, and to unlock potential in [the] ocean. And I believe that the Government is moving in that direction, and I commend that. But those are some of the things that we can do currently without jeopardising potential investment and potential reliability for Bermudians as a whole.

So, with those comments, I reserve more for Committee. But thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member?

MP Linda Smith, you have the floor.

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, am concerned about this being considered a bit of ministerial overreach that could extend the timeline of the process, causing not only delays and additional costs

but also reputational risk and the potential for political interference.

The IRP process is one that is pretty well established in most democracies as a way of going about regulating the utilities. So, it is fairly standard. And the process is that the utility is required to put together an Integrated Resource Plan that normally takes somewhere in the region of two to maybe three years for them to develop. And they develop it in consultation with the RA, who is always looking over their shoulder. And the RA is driven and guided by the energy department and Government policy. And so, all those things are always coming together as this is continually being weighted.

It is a very highly technical process. It is a very cumbersome process, and it is a very expensive process. So, the utility hires a number of consultants who cover all kinds of things from energy economics to financial economics, supply and demand, energy sources, commodity pricing. There is a ton of stuff that goes into the data that is collected and the collating of that data to help tell a story, which may indicate what are some of the best options for Bermuda given its unique qualities.

So, when you take a look at the integrated resource process, like I said, it is a long process. It can take between two and three years, and sometimes longer if there are a lot of complications involved in it. And it is planning for a timeline that is even longer than that because by the time there is agreement on a way forward, then you also have to go out and procure the equipment that you are going to use. You have to bring in the investors to invest the money. You have to have the equipment built, particularly for the Bermuda market because we do not take things off the shelf because we are too small. So oftentimes these things are built specifically for us, so there is a time lag in that. And then, of course, the investor wants to know that their investment is secure, that the project is going to go ahead as they had planned at a cost that they had projected at a budget that is well-regulated, that it is going to work in the end, and that they are going to get a return on their investment.

So, turning the tap on and off on the integrated resource process is really not something that is easy to do, and it certainly is not something that is inexpensive to do.

Taking a look at the Electricity Amendment Act 2026, it does speak specifically to affordability in the purpose of the Act, and it also speaks to affordability, reliability, and sustainability. Those are three values that the Regulatory Authority needs to balance and make sure that the utility is balancing to ensure that the costs are not going to be higher than people can afford. The utility does not want that either, because they want to get their bills paid. They want to keep their customers on the grid. And also, that the fuel options are going to be there, they are going to be sustainable, they are going to be affordable going into the future. But the energy policy also provides a transition to what will be the technologies for the future.

So, there is a lot involved in this, and turning that process on and off for reasons that are really quite difficult to understand in this amendment that has been brought

forward, as there is no specific criteria or definition as to what would cause the Minister to suspend the IRP process . . . What specifically?

And also, [what is] the specific definition of being able to prove that the decisions that are being made and the options being put forward are in the best interest of affordability? Because it is affordability not *versus* reliability, but affordability, reliability, and sustainability. You want people to be able to afford it. You want to make sure it is going to be there when you need it. And you want to make sure that it will continue to operate for the period that you expect, so there's a return on the investment, and the investors will come back again and reinvest in infrastructure in Bermuda.

So, my concern is, one, turning on and off the tap on the IRP, given all the complexities of it, does not seem like a very feasible thing to do. The Regulatory Authority is expected to be an independent, qualified board of people that can look at the IRP. They can look at it with their consultants and with their subject matter experts that they have brought in, and they can make recommendations. They can go back to the utility multiple times and work with them. They have energy policy that has been brought forth by Government that drives the construct of what Government is looking for in terms of the value proposition. So, I am not entirely sure what defines what is trying to be achieved with this amendment. And I would like to hear more about that.

But it is very concerning. And then also at the end of the day, if there is ministerial interference or suspension of the IRP process . . . and two years seems a long time to have that as the extent to which that could last, because two years is almost long enough to negate a lot of the work and the inputs that have gone into the IRP process, because many of the inputs in the IRP process are volatile. So, they change with demographics, they change with commodity prices, they change with future prices, they change with business cycles.

So, there are all these economic aspects that need to be put into the equation, and the longer the IRP sits on the shelf waiting for some determination the more insignificant and less credible the inputs become. So, it just causes the entire process to become less and less reliable.

I would like to hear, as I said, what the definition is of a provision to show that the IRP is considering affordability versus what is already happening today, and any other specifications that would help us to understand what the goal and what the objective is of this amendment we are being asked to consider.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Smith.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Hayward, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to make an intervention.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the submissions by the Members of the Opposition pertaining to the Bill that we have in front of us today, a Bill that would allow for the assurance that there is an alignment between what is in the country's best interest from a Government perspective versus a plan that is set out by industry.

The Integrated Resource Plan [IRP] is developed by industry. The plan is developed and designed by the industry. If it was not, and Government had greater intervention in how that plan was actually developed, there would be no need for the Minister to seek to have intervention through legislation. As elected officials, our job is to ensure we are looking out for the best interest of whom? It's the residents of Bermuda. So, if we want to ensure that, then the Government develops a clear set of objectives and policies that ensure that we get the best outcome for the people of Bermuda.

How long do we grapple with . . . Bermuda pays some of the highest electricity costs in the world. We continue to complain about this year after year after year. But want to engage in the exact same activities that lead to the exact same outcomes.

The Government wants to ensure that electricity is affordable for the people of Bermuda. The Ministry of Home Affairs has set out an entire vision for consultation. In that vision, it has affordability. It has reliability. It has equity. It has low-cost planning, transition to renewable innovation and electrification, accountability and oversight. How do we ensure all of these are built into the IRP? How do we ensure what is happening now as it pertains to the development of that IRP? It takes into consideration the vision of the Government of Bermuda as it pertains to the future energy needs and utilisation in Bermuda.

I think it's important for us to understand that this is not Government intervention to provide preference to one industrial company over another. This is to ensure that Bermuda and the people of Bermuda get the best outcome. All of this talk about kickbacks and things of that nature is misleading and uncalled for. It is not in alignment with what is trying to be achieved.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Point of order, please.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Minister is misleading the House.

There was nothing said in terms of someone receiving kickbacks. It said when you do things like this, it creates the *illusion* of a kickback. And in fact, the Honourable Member, MP Robinson, also added clarification to it. So that was given. The Minister is now misleading the House.

The Speaker: What is . . . I guess, the point they are trying to make is that they did not imply, they didn't say kickback

was given. They are saying it can *imply* that there was a kickback being given.

Hon. Jason Hayward: In fairness, I never said that. But utilising those words, just mentioning some words, creates that bridge to a connection between what we are doing and some nefarious action. And I am saying that's incorrect and improper in the context in which the Minister presented this.

The Minister presented this in terms of what is in the best interest of the Bermuda people. How do we create greater alignment between the Government and industry? How do we ensure that the plan in which industry is building out as pertains to the future energy needs takes into consideration what's in the best interest of the people of Bermuda?

If we are moving forward with consultation and a vision for Bermuda's future energy needs, how does that get incorporated into the plan that is already being produced?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. And I've heard the question a few times. The Minister is misleading the House.

These things that the Minister is speaking of are already in the Electricity Act: affordability, innovation, and the like. So, I don't understand why he's presenting it to this House as though those things are not already in the remit.

The Speaker: I think he's building his argument, his presentation on where he's going to deliver.

Go ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, if you were to be naïve enough to believe that industry doesn't want to ensure that it maintains and maximises profits . . . that is the principal aim of the shareholders of the electricity company. They want to ensure that they maximise their profits on behalf of their shareholders. We want to ensure that the people of Bermuda don't get shafted in this process. We want to ensure—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: [Point of order], Mr. Speaker. The Minister is continuing to mislead the House.

This IRP process has public consultation and is approved by the Regulatory Authority. What he is suggesting, the Honourable Minister is suggesting—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: No, he can give his point of order.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Come on, man.

Hon. Jason Hayward: What is the point of order?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The point of order is that the Minister is misleading the House. The public has consultation . . . to say that the interest of the people is not represented . . . people can literally represent themselves in this IRP process. To say that it is meant to preserve cost, the RA is there to facilitate making sure that the cost and the affordability for Bermudians is managed. So, what it sounds like, Mr. Speaker, is that the Minister is saying the RA isn't capable of doing that.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Minister . . . what the Member is trying to clarify is that the structure—

Hon. Jason Hayward: Let me ask another question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Who is the Member sitting in this House speaking on behalf of?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: My constituents.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Because it seems as though he's speaking on behalf of either the Regulator or the company.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Let me finish my sentence. Let me—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It's imputing improper . . . I am not letting you finish that, Minister.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: You are imputing improper motives.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.
First of all—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: He knows what he's doing!

The Speaker: —I have to accept your point of order, okay? Don't get all riled up over it. Don't get riled up. Don't get riled up. Don't get riled up.

Minister, continue your vein. Clarify where you are going and it should be okay.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Let me ask another question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Jason Hayward: How can a Member of this House say that the people don't need you to represent them as their representative, they can represent themselves in this process?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. That is the second time that the Minister is imputing improper motive, and misquoted me in a debate. As a Minister with the responsibility he has, please make sure that the debate is accurate. [I] never said that. And he should retract it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: For clarity on that point, I don't believe what you said was that they don't need representation. I think what you said was that the structure of the regulation, the Regulatory Authority, provides the room for—

An Hon. Member: Public consultation.

The Speaker: —the consultation that a member of the public can make.

An Hon. Member: Correct.

The Speaker: I don't think the Minister was saying that the Members up here don't need to represent their constituents.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I don't think that is what he was saying.

He was saying that what he's doing on his feet is speaking to the fact that the representation that comes from this floor in reference to the concerns of the constituents or the public in these matters, when it comes to that. Both are there to help . . . both are there to help the public: the voice that you bring, the voice that he brings, and the guidelines and the regulations.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that clarification.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Government released an energy plan. That energy plan then set out a number of tenets that we want to ensure are built in any process moving forward when we begin to discuss Bermuda's energy needs.

Again, to reiterate, we are up here in this House of Assembly saying that we want to ensure that our future energy supply remains affordable to the people of Bermuda.

An Hon. Member: We all agree with that.

Another Hon. Member: Everybody agrees.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, tick.

We want to ensure that it's also reliable.

An Hon. Member: We agree!

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: So, we can collectively tick on that.
We want to ensure that there's equity—

An Hon. Member: Of course.

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —so that people are not locked out of the grid or left without energy.

An Hon. Member: Maybe as an independent regulator.

Hon. Jason Hayward: So, I guess that's a collective tick.
We want to ensure that there's low-cost planning as well.

An Hon. Member: You are on Kim Swan's wicket.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: We want to ensure that we have a proper transition to renewables. We want to ensure that there is innovation in electrification.

An Hon. Member: Okay, yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Tick, everybody agrees with that.

An Hon. Member: Tick, tick.

Hon. Jason Hayward: We also want to ensure that there is accountability and oversight. And that's a tick as well.

Several Hon. Members: By whom?

Hon. Jason Hayward: Right?

An Hon. Member: You say Minister; we say Regulatory Authority.

Hon. Jason Hayward: And then we want to ensure that there is interdepartmental cooperation.

An Hon. Member: Which departments are we talking about?

Another Hon. Member: Energy—

Hon. Jason Hayward: So, Planning, Energy, Workforce Development, they are all listed in the consultation document—

An Hon. Member: Can you read it?

Hon. Jason Hayward: —if one was to read it.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: It's dry.

Another Hon. Member: It's really dry.

Hon. Jason Hayward: But, Mr. Speaker, if we agree with all those principles, the Minister is simply saying that this Government, we don't want to leave it up to just simply public consultation. We want to ensure—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: We want to ensure that what is produced is in alignment with those tenets that we all collectively agree with. And, as a result of that, the Minister is justified in her actions with bringing this Bill forward to ensure we get the best outcomes for the people of Bermuda.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution? Thank you, Minister.
MP Fahy.

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

The Minister certainly has encapsulated perhaps 90 per cent of what we can all agree on. So, well done. Great, great, great wicket.

Then he suggests in his final remarks that the Regulatory Authority can't do their job. Because that's what it sounds like.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order.

Hon. Michael Fahy: That is what it sounds like.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Jason Hayward: The Member is deliberately misleading the House.

An Hon. Member: No, no.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I think just now when I tried to make an interjection, I was basically trying to clear that point up. I think what MP Robinson was saying and what the Minister was saying was basically looking out for the interests of the public from both perspectives.

The Regulatory Authority does what it does and the position that the Minister was saying just now on his feet was a similar buffer to make sure that the public's interest is protected.

I wouldn't say that they are saying neither one can't do the job, or the other is weak in its job. It is a support system that makes sure that both . . . the best interest is looked after from different perspectives.

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

I would say that it can be inferred, okay, that the Regulatory Authority perhaps can't do it as capably as a Minister because that's what this Bill is doing.

This Bill is essentially saying the Minister can suspend or reconstitute the IRP that is done in heavy consultation with the Regulatory Authority and the utility. It is quite correct, as the Minister has stated, that it is put together and drafted by the utility company.

And I don't think there's anyone on this side of the House or that side of the House or anyone in Bermuda that is going to say that there is something wrong, that BELCO is this amazing company and we are all happy. No, people are not. We all agree on that.

An Hon. Member: And we do.

Hon. Michael Fahy: We all agree on that.

But the Government seems to believe that the only way or one of the best ways in which to lower electricity costs is to have a Minister give directions in a way through the Act.

Let's read this. This is . . . if I may, Mr. Speaker, this is from the Government's website giving a very brief blurb on what the Regulatory Authority of Bermuda is. It's "an independent regulatory body, mandated to promote fair business practices, protect consumer[s] and industry stakeholders, and encourage innovation and [integrity] of the electronic communications, electricity and subsea sectors."

It's to take into account consumer protection and make sure that costs are as low as they can. Are we satisfied? No. Okay? We're not.

An Hon. Member: Okay.

Hon. Michael Fahy: But we say that the Regulatory Authority is the proper place for that to be undertaken to protect the consumer of Bermuda.

There are other ways in which you can make sure or encourage the Regulatory Authority to continue going down a road of ensuring better costs for consumers.

Now, I have on those notes some very simple questions for the Minister that I really hope that she will address and advise the people of Bermuda what her next steps will be when this Bill passes, because it will pass unless the backbench of the Government miraculously does something different than we expect. But it will pass and there's got to be something that the Minister intends to do immediately after this Bill passes in respect of the powers that she will then have. Okay?

Perhaps the Minister can share with this Honourable House what she intends to do.

So, does the Minister intend, once this Bill passes, to suspend or reconstitute the IRP? Which parts and for how long and why? There has to be a plan. You don't just bring this forward on a whim. You bring it forward because there's a next step.

Now, you have a utility company that is putting together this IRP and you may recall, gosh, it must have been 15, 16 months ago. I stood up here and asked about why it was taking so long. We were told *there's lots of collaboration, it's still coming. It's not late.*

Well, it is. The Minister has pretty much said it's not out there. This thing, I think the last one is 2018.

So, we now have a problem because we are going to be passing something eventually here with no knowledge of what's really going to come next. So, I think it's incumbent upon the Minister to answer those questions.

How quickly after this Bill passes will the Minister issue an order or directive pursuant to the Act (and I'll repeat it) to suspend or reconstitute the IRP, which parts and for how long? Okay?

And in respect of the public interest test, she should also explain how any potential changes or potential . . . excuse me, potential directives or orders that she's going to give to reconstitute or suspend the IRP is in the public interest. Explain it so we can all understand. And maybe when we hear that, maybe our honourable friend on the other side, Minister Hayward, MP Hayward, maybe we will agree. You never know.

But let's get some more information. I doubt it; but you never know. But we need the information. It's not enough to just come here and say we are better than everyone else.

An Hon. Member: Nobody said that.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Well, that's what it certainly appears like, because you're putting a Minister into the picture. And what the Minister said in her presentation is, okay, this is a power for any future government, any government that wants to be, any other party that wants to become a government, or words to that effect.

It's a dangerous precedent when you have that ministerial potential, what is seen as interference, based on what may just be political expediency for the moment of the day. Because the public interest test is not really set out. And what my prediction will be, Mr. Speaker, is that there will be legal action by the utility company, most likely in the event that there is this suspension or reconstitution of the IRP.

It seems to me that if the Government is so intent on all the collaboration that they seem to think they're so very good at, that they should be sitting down more wholesomely, more often with the Regulatory Authority and the utility and get all of them together in the room and come up with the plan that seems to be the best for the people of Bermuda. Not simply to say, *well, if you don't do what we say, you're going to be directed to do what we say.* That's not acceptable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Does] any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

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

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Shadow Minister Dwayne Robinson, MP, has already spoken pretty authoritatively to this Bill and so I just want to add a few quick points.

I am going to go back to the former speaker from the other side, Minister Hayward, and his ticks where we agree. Look, we all want lower energy costs. Right? Tick. That's the starting point.

We all want reliable energy costs.

An Hon. Member: Tick.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Tick. We agree there. Why? Well, it impacts on all our lives, and to a degree we don't even realise or think about. You know? Take a hurricane, right? How many days is your electricity gone? You're sitting in your house, the water stops running, the fridge isn't working, that mobile phone runs out of juice, even if you've got several batteries stored away. Imagine that amplified over a period of time that's a week, two weeks, three weeks, a month. Right?

So, we all want reliable, low-cost energy. Tick. Okay?

The debate between the Opposition and the Government is: How do we achieve this?

And indeed, and I'll say this, it does also appear to be a debate between the Ministry and the Regulatory Authority because we say the correct vehicle to solve this problem is the Regulatory Authority, the independent Regulatory Authority. And we say the correct vehicle to solve this problem is not, with the greatest respect to the Minister (I don't mean this in a personal capacity. I'd say it about any Minister of the Government.) . . . is not through the Minister grabbing the wheel.

Now, just for the benefit of the listening public, because this can be confusing. This is a complicated topic. I accept it. I am confused all the time.

IRP, what does it actually mean? Integrated Resource Plan. So, when I use the expression IRP, I'm talking about Bermuda's Integrated Resource Plan for Energy. And it's important that word "integrated" because a lot of people contributed to this Plan, which I think was 2018 or thereabouts. A lot . . . 2019. I am grateful for the Minister's correction. It was 2019.

A lot of people—and with respect to the Honourable Minister—not just industry, this big demon of industry. Sure, of course the utility will have contributed to the Integrated Resource Plan, but so did the public. So did Greenrock. So did a number of entities and people. And I believe, as my colleague, I think it was MP Robinson mentioned, even the University of Edinburgh contributed to the IRP.

And so, if we are going to press the pause button . . . actually let me back up.

If this House is going to pass a Bill changing the law to allow the Minister to intervene to press the pause button on the IRP, there had better be a pretty damn good reason and no obvious alternative solution.

And we say there is an obvious alternative solution, mainly the independent Regulatory Authority whose job it is to do this.

Now, my colleague, MP Linda Smith, explained how the IRP all came together. And I don't need to go back over that ground. But the simple point is the IRP was prepared by experts. Now, I accept as much as the next person, [it] doesn't mean an expert is always right. Sometimes experts can be wrong, too. But most of the time, given a choice between an elected politician who is a part-time politician who may not be a subject matter expert, and the experts who have taken a long time and a lot of money to prepare an IRP, I think perhaps we might want to look to the experts. Again, it doesn't mean they're always right.

I also make the point, because I'm getting some chirping from Minister Hayward, but let's not forget that since 2018, the former Home Affairs Minister, who used to sit right over there, and I know this because I was the Shadow. I was MP Rabain's Shadow, Minister Rabain's Shadow [Minister]. He didn't stand up and rail against the IRP. Indeed, he endorsed the IRP. So, there is a departure here.

There is a volte-face that's going on.

So, again, how do we differ? Because, thank you, Minister Hayward, you identified a number of points where we agree. And it's odd, because the listening public seem to think we never agree in this House, but we often do. In fact, most of the Bills today, I think we agreed on.

But on this Bill, we don't agree.

And we don't agree, because what do we say should happen? Well, conveniently, the One Bermuda Alliance answered the question as to what should happen, and we did so almost three years ago.

Three years ago, we brought forward a proposal on how to bring down energy costs. We invited the PLP Government, under a different Minister, I accept, under a different former Deputy Premier as well, to come back in the House and to pass legislation to give better teeth to the RA.

We did so after we asked the RA to meet with us. And a delegation from the One Bermuda Alliance, including a number of the MPs sitting here with me today, went and had a very long meeting with the RA, at which we were told we (the RA) do not have sufficient regulatory power under our existing statute to have the teeth to control energy prices with regard to affordability protections—the phrase that the Minister used in her speech.

They said, we do not have that power.

And so, quite rightly, as my colleague, [MP] Dwayne Robinson has already observed, what should we do? Well, we said, let's amend the Regulatory Act. Let's give them sufficient power to take into account affordability protection. And take that in hand with the fact, as my colleague, [MP] Dwayne Robinson, already observed, that the

Electricity Act itself has reference to affordability protection, or words similar to that.

So, what we said was, *Come back into the House, and we will agree with you. Let's amend the Regulatory Act to give the independent Regulatory Authority greater powers so that they can take into account accountability issues, accountability protections.* Because if someone is going to take that decision, it really should be the independent Regulatory Authority and, with respect, not any Minister of the Government. It's not for the Minister to grab the wheel.

And so, when in her speech the Minister anticipated accusations of allegations of ministerial interference, she was right to do so. And indeed, this is ministerial interference. It is a Bill that is going to give the Minister the power, not only to stop the IRP for a two-year period, with consultation, fairly, but also to reverse some or all aspects of the IRP. And we can get into that language in Committee. And we just do not think that is the right way to do things. You do not buy a dog and bark yourself. You do not create an independent Regulatory Authority and people it with some very strong people (and the Government appoints many of the commissioners of the RA), and then decide, actually, better to get a Minister to decide this.

My third point, Mr. Speaker, is [that] the danger here is a very political (small "p," political) danger. We, as politicians, want to solve the Island's problems. We want to solve our constituents' problems, and we want to do so as quickly as we can. The problem is that some problems are complicated. They are difficult, and they require long-term solutions to get where you want to go. And so, we have this sort of what I call "microwave society." We want everything, "bing," in 40 seconds or 30 seconds. I am confident that with the best intentions that this Honourable Minister wants to bring down the cost of energy, and she wants more reliable energy. I do not undermine her motive in any way. I'm confident.

But I do respectfully say that the solution she is proposing in this legislation is not the right solution. Give more powers to the RA. You will have our support for that.

And I also respectfully say that you must look beyond the first layer of consequence, because the history of Government interference in business is not a happy one. Still less is it a happy history when it is Government interference in regulated entities. And it is even less a happy situation when it is interference in regulated entities that are also utilities. Right? Because these are public sector, and this is the sole public sector utility, more or less. And so that is a . . . it has really not worked out well, historically.

And let us just, again, my crystal ball is just as cloudy as anyone else's in here. But let us look in that crystal ball. And I know my colleague, MP Robinson, and indeed MP Fahy, and indeed MP Linda Smith, started to look in their crystal ball. What do we think is going to happen if we pass this Bill and the Minister grabs the wheel? Okay? It is possible the Minister will solve the problems, and energy costs will come crumbling down, and reliability will be shooting up, and everybody will be happy, and the Minister will be praised by both sides of the aisle. That is possible.

It is also highly improbable, because this is not an easy solution that is going to be solved overnight with the snap of a ministerial finger, with the grab of the wheel.

There are agreements in place with the utility provider. There are agreements that have the involvement of the Regulatory Authority. So let us suppose that the stop bell is pressed by the Minister. And let us suppose that aspects of the IRP are reversed. Otherwise, why give yourself a power if you do not intend to use it? And let us suppose that the Minister, having grabbed the wheel, drives into this very complicated debate. You are brave—not wise, but brave—to try to solve the problem. It is not an easily solvable one.

And again, let us look beyond the first and second layers of consequence, and see what is going to happen. How is this going to play out? Well, one of my colleagues has already mentioned that there might be a lawsuit because there is an agreement in place, and there is the ARC, and they have their rate of return. And if that starts to dip below a certain point on the ARC, they are not going to be terribly happy about that. And they will hire those dreaded things called lawyers, and they will come up with the Government of Bermuda, and ultimately, if the Government of Bermuda loses a lawsuit, who pays? The Bermudian taxpayer. So that is not helpful.

How else might it play out? Well, they might say, *Okay, you are denying us our rate of return that we agreed on, so we have to cut back on costs*, and we are going to see job losses. Well, none of us wants that. Agreed, "tick." Nobody wants job losses. So that is how it could play out. Or, they could simply say, *Well, fine, we will take the hit, the financial hit. But we are going to withdraw our capital investment, having taken the hit.*

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of information.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: And I do think that the Honourable Member, though well-intended, is steering from the substance of today's debate. We are not talking about capital investment. We are not talking about the rate of return, but simply a process, a regulated process, namely, the Integrated Resource Plan. I do invite the Honourable Member to keep his contribution focused to that. Otherwise, it is unintentionally misleading the House.

The Speaker: It is not . . . I would not say it is misleading the House. We are in the House, which means the discussion can be broader. And it is talking about some of the impacts of how they could respond. He is not going down the clauses. If you are on the Committee, none of that would be allowed. But some way of broadness is allowed in presenting it, as long as he keeps it tied to the Bill, the content of the Bill, and he keeps tying it to the content.

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

And I am very happy to reiterate that what I was doing was looking in what I call the cloudy crystal ball and looking at potential consequences, looking at the second or third or fourth move on the chess board if [the] Government interferes with the current situation.

Am I right that these are going to happen? Who knows? I do not know. But these are just—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: No, no.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I mean, [Minister] Hayward is laughing. But if you are going to take a decision, you have got to look at [what] the consequences are of that decision.

I mean, again, I want to be very clear. I am not being personal to the Minister. I think it is very brave of you to wade into this topic. I think it is a very dangerous topic to wade into. I think it is very unwise when you have an independent regulator. But if you are going to grab the wheel and you are going to drive in, you have got to start to think, *Well, how are the corresponding parties going to react?* And I am sure the Minister's given thought to that. And I am just suggesting how some of them may react.

And by the way, I do not think it is a crazy suggestion to say that if the rate of return of the sole regulator of the Island goes down because of a ministerial intervention by legislation, that they do not sue. I think that is not a crazy suggestion. And who pays for that? The taxpayer would pay for that.

But let us take a lesser example, right? Instead of putting the capital into the business that they put in, they might put in lesser capital. And again, I reference job losses. I do think that that is a legitimate consideration. We should at least be worried, will there be? How do we avoid there being?

Another possibility, sporadic service, less reliability, brownouts, right? We do not want to become an Island where that happens. And we said [there might be] a possible lawsuit. And again, the point I am making is that the history of Government intervention into business is not a happy one. I think that is really all I need to say, Mr. Speaker, beyond this.

This is a difficult topic. And when faced with a difficult topic, you need to step back. And the instincts of all politicians, and I think it is fair for me to attribute to them, but all politicians are usually short-term. How do I keep the voter happy? How do I, you know, get through the next election? How do I survive my ministerial portfolio until the ministerial portfolio changes on me? You know, how can I make the best decisions? But these are all short-term decisions, right? And what we want is a long-term decision. Because when you are planning energy for a jurisdiction, you have got to look out 10, 20, 30 years. And you have got to see, you know, what that looks like. And that is why we have Integrated Resource Plans.

As I say, I accept it is complicated. I appreciate, and I want to make very clear that my comments about ministerial interference are not unique to this Minister. I just think it is a very dangerous road to go down. As they say, the road to ruin is paved with good intentions. And I am quite confident that her intentions in reducing prices and trying to get greater reliability are pure. But I think that the Minister is doing something that is unlikely to help greatly. It would be better to put this in the hands of the Independent Regulatory Authority. And moreover, not only is it unlikely to help, but it may well do greater harm.

And for those reasons, as my colleagues have already stated, we would not support this Bill

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few notes. I think that the OBA has articulated its position relatively well.

As far as [the] solution is concerned, I would concur that more powers to the Authority would probably and more likely be the better route. And after several of us have gone through the Bill, I guess we will get to [it] in some of these clauses, but it is hard to differentiate between what is in the Bill and what is new. Much of what is in the Bill is already happening. And so there is this grey area of, okay, well, for the Minister, special powers. A lot of this stuff is already happening, and the involvement is already there.

As far as an integrated plan is concerned, I do not think that this is a new concept in Bermuda or around the world. This is something that puts together all players in the field and tries to come up with a long-term plan. It does seem a bit like we are trying to fix an immediate situation, an immediate cry to high prices, when we did not get to this point overnight. And we are not going to get out of it overnight. So, a quick stay on pricing is a bit problematic, as we heard today in statements talking about fuel. Okay, well, fine, you know, we are going to hold the prices. But we are also going to promise the importer that we will make them whole. And we could not even get clear answers this morning about how that is happening.

The Minister mentioned in one of her statements, I am looking for the note here where the intent was to make sure and ensure that businesses are made whole, and that we must work in tandem and not against one another. So, again, this grey area between too much involvement has this unintended consequence. And I spoke about it this morning. That unintended consequence is interest that we, the taxpayer, would have to pay later on down the road. Not right now, but later on down the road they may have to pay. And I gave the example of when BELCO did assist and help Bermuda. But that money must be paid back with interest. Now, we were told that, you know, we have learned our lessons, but no one wants to give any specifics. And so, all we are asking for is more specifics to exactly how this is going to work. You know? And why should we trust the process?

Take a look at local business right now. We are making a big fuss about BELCO, who, quite frankly, is probably close to 100 per cent is Bermudian-hired, who quite frankly, great jobs, good salaries, good benefits. Mercy, if you became a CEO back in the day, these benefits were incredible. Now, what we are talking about is risking some of these unintended consequences of ministerial involvement. Not to say that it is going to cause this, but there are unintended consequences. Because anyone bringing their investment to the Island, or any Bermudian putting their investment in local business, wants to know that it can thrive.

And the . . . I mean, I sat down with the Authority, myself, Scott, and a few others, several years ago looking at the formulary that is being used. And it is quite a science. And it is nothing new. It is done all around the world to ensure that fair pricing happens. It is the same thing in other industries, like insurance industries, that there is a fair return involved. All of these things are happening.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do not see any legislation coming forward to Allshores, and I have complained about that on enough times. But yet, we are here now regulating. I am just using it as an example. So, if we are to trust the process, you know, we should be applying it across the board. On one hand, other businesses get away with all kinds of things. On this hand, here we are screaming about it, and we are saying we need to have more involvement in the process. And we have no involvement in other industries, major industries. But we have involvement here, where a Minister can sit down with the Authority and go through the sensitivities of where we need to be.

My honourable colleague talked about these unintended consequences. You know, lawsuits potentially, loss of jobs, benefits, fair salaries, and the like. And not to mention, now, I mean, it has changed hands. Now, that business will have to consider if they have more involvement in this process, which they all agreed on. Everyone at the table agreed on this whole process with the Regulatory Authority back some time ago, 2018, I guess it was, whenever it was.

We agreed to the process: *Get this Regulatory Authority involved and let's start looking at an integrated plan and let's start looking at all of the processes in a fair return.* If we start messing with that fair return . . . and I am talking about from experience with the Government. If we are going to talk about fair equity . . . people do not mind investing, but they've got to get that money back, just like anyone in this room if it owns a business. If it is putting its money into something and investing it, it is a sacrifice, then at some point in time, it is going to be looking for a return.

And so, I have not heard yet where the Authority has not been able to provide fair and equitable returns for everyone, and rate. What we have heard is that the public is saying that the prices are going up, and they are increasing, and we have got to find a way to stop that, to arrest it. Whatever that is. So, what we are trying to do now is immediately address a cry when there is a long-term plan to fixing that. [If] you get in debt for a billion dollars, it takes a while to pay down the billion dollars.

So, here we are now in a pickle, and we are trying to say, *Okay, look, you know, we better not get any more increases in these rates.* But somebody is going to have to sacrifice. Okay, fair enough, yes, businesses need to sacrifice just like everyone else. I agree with that. And [the] Government is in a position where it is saying, *Okay, well, we got an Authority here, let us make sure that everybody is fair and equitable.*

Well, with the inclusion of this Bill, with the Minister's involvement, how is that any different than what is already going on? And so, if the Minister intervenes because it does not agree with the integrated plan, or if it does not agree with the rate, then the question becomes, *Okay then, is this politically driven? Or is this truly in the interest of the people?*

Now, any Government worth its salt is going to say it is in the interest of the people. Well, that is not to say that it does not have a strong political swing to it. But if you have experts involved who are advising the Minister (who is not an expert in this area), [that] these are the best practices, and the Minister has every right to question everything that comes to the table as to the equity in it, the fairness in it, I do not see where we have a problem. So, this is not adding, this Bill is not adding anything to what is already happening other than making this more vulnerable. That is what this is doing. It is making the whole situation more vulnerable.

And I have been on record before, if we have a challenge, I said it before, *Government, listen, just take it over.* If that is the case, just take it over. The business is going to . . . all the business is going to do at the end of the day is make an assessment and say, *Well, we are just going to sell out.* And then we will have another person, another company come in, and then they will just sell out.

We already see it happening in the fuel industry. It is a trend. How many times has ESSO's name changed hands? We still call it ESSO, but it is changing hands all the time. You want to know why? Because we have got too many hands trying to say this is where it needs to go. And so, for sure, the board of directors is at some point in time going to say, *Well, hold on a second, next bidder please.* And then we have got another situation on our hands.

And so, in the interest of this, I appreciate the Minister wants to get to some results. We are not clear exactly on all of what she is targeting, but if it is targeting lower rates, we all know that is almost an impossible task. What we want is a plan going forward on how everyone can afford to pay their bill. And if they cannot, what is the plan on how we fix that? And I believe that the Authority has the ability to put some things in place and give them the power to act on these things, because they have a mandate as well.

And that mandate is in the interest of the people. It is not in the interest of BELCO and its holders. It is in the interest of the people. That is why the Authority is there. It is solely there for the interest of the people. It is not even there for the interest of the Authority, because it can change hands, or whoever is on the commission. The names can change. Its whole purpose is in the interest of the people.

That is no different than the Minister's mandate in the interest of the people.

So let's figure out how we come together. This is not working. It lacks a whole lot of detail on what the intent really is.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

None?

Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the honourable colleagues, both on the other side and also on this side, for their contributions to today's debate.

Mr. Speaker, I must begin first with the current state. And the current state that we have, which is a piece of legislation that was written and tabled in 2015, tabled in 2016, and formed by a policy in 2015. It would be by the other Administration. It would be difficult at that time to foresee the impact of a piece of legislation should it not go as intended. A number of things have changed since that piece of legislation, so eloquently both tabled and stewarded by the former Administration. But when the TD&R licence holder is no longer a local interested company, a company that is owned by Bermudians, it is a foreign-owned entity, that changes the environment.

When there is an IRP that is confirmed from 2019, and we are in 2026, the question becomes, what can we point to [that] was the success of the process once envisioned and stewarded at that time? Because if we were to look at the fruits of the current IRP process, the question would be, how can we point to the aggressive generation and the 20-month procurement and the wind technologies, when only in 2015 were we actually inviting wind expressions of interest? Which says that the IRP and the process that was so eloquently stewarded and articulated in law, that is being defined as perfectly in nature, did not operate as intended. And so, my intention is to right-size the transition.

As included in my remarks, I spoke to the policy and its intentions. The policy that includes a collaborative electricity sector, that includes collaboration and feedback by all industry stakeholders. And is not at the sole whim and/or being directed by the utility and refined by the Regulatory Authority.

What is also true is that in practice, though stewarded and written in law, the process for which a utility and its interest, and we already know that they have changed because there has been a sale since the Electricity Act and since the IRP. It has changed. And so therefore, the interest has adjusted. And the Regulatory Authority (to the point that was raised) does require greater teeth, and that is a matter before the Ministry. But in addition to that, the people in the meantime must also be considered.

And so as this Administration and successive Administrations have sought to right-size electricity transition,

articulate electricity goals, what is known and also true and stated by all stakeholders who are involved is that there is a disconnect between the interests of the Administration, the Government in its policy, in its mandate given by those who have elected us to serve on their behalf. There is a disconnect between that intention and the promise and the ability to do so as currently enshrined in law.

The powers that are prescribed in the amendment do not create wholesale ministerial discretion. And my remarks today clarified what the provisions of the Act actually seek to do within specific circumstances, prioritising the public interest. Specific circumstances. It is not ministerial directions as entrenched in the current Regulatory Authority Act and Electricity Act, but rather in specific interests and specific circumstances as informed by what is in the sectoral legislation. And in this instance is the Electricity Act.

The IRP and affordability, we have agreed today, we agree that we want lower cost. But as my ministerial brief and successive reports have confirmed, we have not received lower electricity costs. And so, therefore, that indicates to us all that there is a current problem with the current architecture that ought to be right-sized. The fact that we all want low-cost energy, but since it was enacted in 2015, and in 2016 and in 2019 IRPs, we have not seen the fruits of that agreement. We have not seen the fruit of what is intended to be, putting the consumer and their interests first.

Now, there have been things that have changed in the electricity sector, including technology, including things that would have been prescribed in the IRP that no longer are beneficial and have deemed to be viable in Bermuda's context, and that is fine. But what cannot be done is that there is an IRP. There is an investment in technology and studies when we know that the policy has since changed. A 2015 policy is not suited for a 2026 event. We see the impact of the world's oil and fuel volatility that impacts cost. And so, if we are considering a 2015 world that did not foresee and/or consider in both the legislation and in its planning and in its scenarios—yes, done by experts, but even experts do not have the ability to predict the future—it does not consider current state and where we are as a country. And it does not seek to have a level of grounding in the interests that are Bermudian.

We talk about . . . I heard questions raised regarding how the experts who would have crafted the IRP and its intended transition must be given their due expertise. But what happens in practice, and I cannot speak to how the previous Minister did or did not communicate this. But what happens in practice and what should be known is that there will be IRPs presented, of which they have to then be invested and refined because they are so materially different than what the Government and the Administration would have clarified.

So, because I cannot speak to a former Minister and his actions, what I can speak to is what I have done since I have been a Minister. And in May of 2025, I would have issued a Ministerial Directive to the Regulatory Authority under the current architecture of the current law that we think, and I have heard Members share on the other

side, is sufficient. The Ministerial Directive talked about reliability, about rate and tariff redesign. It has talked about consumer protection and the customer, the customer and the Bermudian ultimately being prioritised in future iterations.

Yet still, we have a process that has continued to run that does not consider the ways in which it could do that. There are intended reports and things that would be conducted in the future, but still it is not being considered because the current law does not invite a Ministerial Directive to have an impact on a process that is before the Regulatory Authority.

Members of this House shared about how the IRP was late and all of these things, which would argue and suggest that this is a matter before the Regulatory Authority. And so, therefore, a Ministerial Directive, a policy declaration, a Throne Speech or anything of the like does not have the ability to impact and/or course-correct an existing process that is before the Regulatory Authority. They communicated that to me as well to confirm the same.

And so, ultimately knowing who I serve and who I am elected to serve, it is for the Bermudian people and on behalf of their interests. And so, it would be remiss of me to identify a problem that is not effective. It would be remiss of me to identify a process that, while well-intended and also stewarded appropriately, has not considered the fact that there would be a policy that is not in state, and that did not consider the fact that there would be technological advances and things, and sales of entities. And so, therefore, it is prudent for a government to consider those changes and architect a framework that [the] current Government and future Governments should be able to use through the mandate that they would have been elected through and the people that they have been elected to serve.

The suggestion of job losses and the threat of all of these things, we have already seen them. We can just look at the reports of 2021, 2022, and 2023, and 2024 to say that, again, the well-intended and things that although they may have been thought to be perfect at its time and maybe they were correct for that time, they are eligible to evolve, and the public should always be considered. If it were perfectly written, then we would not see certain things take place. We would not be all in this House agreeing that we should have low-cost of electricity. And I heard Honourable Members say they agree that more could be done. Well, this is the more that we are seeking to do on behalf of the people.

The suggestion of ministerial interference and the questions that would suggest that a Minister's power is now being eligible to steward and/or dictate the IRP process is incorrect. And I do invite the Members to review the legislation that is being proposed today, and it does not invite that at all. The IRP will remain a product of the independent regulator in concert with the TD&R licence holder. But it says that the current direction of travel that considers an old policy, is no longer fit for purpose. It says that that there have been technological advances that we ought to further consider and refine, as informed by the current policy that

the Government has published, to further weigh in or understand the Government's intentions in terms of its next step, the policy is where it ought to live.

And it would not be prudent for, behind closed doors, there to be this tussle between the Regulator and the Government's policy. But rather, this piece of legislation brings it to the fore in true transparency, not where there are instances where there is refinement behind closed doors. But on behalf of the people the refinement takes place in the public domain. And then it becomes the subject of both the Regulator and the TD&R licence holder and all stakeholders to weigh in on how the future of the transition ought to go.

The principle of consumer protection and consumer price and affordability is not a current principle in the section of the Electricity Act for which this amendment is seeking to ensure it is considering. But for us including that principle you have technologies that will have to be paid back, incurring costs that, maybe, if the consumer were prioritised today, the consumer who cannot afford increased costs . . . if the consumer ought to be considered, then the decision to deploy technology that will incur further costs to them would not be made.

The next step that the Ministry seeks to do is to finalise its [National] Electricity Sector Policy and to ensure that the policy reflects the Government's direction. The realignment offers a pragmatic approach to reflect affordability. We know that the provision in the IRP, as guided by section 39, does insert a general duty to ensure affordability in performing the respective functions under the [TD&R] licensee. But it does not have a duty to consider consumer affordability in its integrated resource planning as being presented to this Honourable House.

When asked what the amendment is seeking to achieve, it is to allow for the policy to update an outdated policy . . . the policy to be updated, and for an IRP to consider only an updated policy, which is no longer relevant after 11 years and should have the ability to pivot based on current state, based on what we now know.

Consultation with stakeholders has taken place, and their response during the consultation is that they have no objection to this transition. This transition is part of what is informed by the National Electricity Sector Policy and a policy that will still run as independent by the regulator and informed by the licensee.

What is included in the National Electricity Sector Policy is the fact that the transition of an IRP would be given to the Regulatory Authority that is best suited to both steward and ensure that the costs that are incurred are limited. Each time we allow for the existing process to take place where an IRP could be crafted, invested in, and incur further cost to the ratepayer based on the initial proposal by the licensee and then refinement by the Regulatory Authority, it is not a process that considers the consumer. It is not a process that considers what is in the best interest of Bermuda. And it is not a process that ought to be continued. If it does not work, it ought to be adjusted. And that is what this legislation is seeking to amend and refine.

It is not seeking to offer further interference with the process, but rather, as given the mandate [by] the people who elected us, it is to ensure that the Government's policy and its promises around affordability are considered. And I think future Governments should want that on behalf of the Bermudian interests, not just the current administration.

I believe I have sufficiently answered the questions that were raised in the debate, Mr. Speaker. And so therefore—

The Speaker: You can just move to Committee now.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I now move us into Committee to consider this Electricity [Amendment Act 2026].

The Speaker: Thank you.
Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 5:04 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Electricity Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister of Home Affairs.
Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, *[sic]* I move that clauses 1 through 8.

An Hon. Member: Madam Chairman.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Chairman . . . sorry, I now move that clauses 1 through 8 be considered.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 8 be considered.

Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
So moved.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides that this Bill be cited as the Electricity Amendment Act 2026.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the Electricity Act 2016 (referred to as the principal Act), by inserting a new definition of the term “integrated resource planning process” or “IRP process.” This term means the process by which an integrated resource plan is requested, submitted, and considered for approval under sections 40 to 44 of the principal Act.

Clause 3 amends section 8(4) of the principal Act to clarify that the existing restrictions of the Minister's power to give Ministerial directions are without prejudice to the

new section. But this ensures that the Minister's special public-interest powers under section 13A are preserved, notwithstanding the general limitations on Ministerial directions in relation to specific matters before the Regulatory Authority, or specific rights or obligations of individual licensees.

Clause 4 inserts a new section 13A into the principal Act. And section 13A provides for the Minister's special powers in the public interest. It empowers the Minister to make an order for the purposes set out in the new Part 8[A], where the Minister is of the opinion that it is in the public interest to do so.

Section 13A also permits the Minister, by such order, to direct the Regulatory Authority to take only such actions that are necessary to give effect to the order. The Regulatory Authority is required to comply with those directions.

And, Madam Chairman, section 13A further provides that a direction given for those purposes shall not constitute a Ministerial direction under the Electricity Act 2016, or as defined in the Regulatory Authority Act 2011. This section applies, notwithstanding anything to the contrary in the principal Act of the Regulatory Authority Act 2011.

Clause 5 inserts a new section 39[A] into the principal Act. And section 39A imposes a general duty on the Regulatory Authority on the transmission, distribution and retail licensee in performing their respective functions and obligations under the Act to consider consumer affordability in all integrated resource planning and decision-making processes. It further requires that consumer affordability protections form an integral part of the integrated resource plan.

Clause 6 amends section 44 of the principal Act. Clause 6 provides that in any case to which section 45B applies, following the resumption of the IRP process, the Regulatory Authority may approve the Integrated Resource Plan if it considers that the final draft Integrated Resource Plan is the best approach to meeting the purposes of the Act and complying with the Ministerial directions. In doing so, the Authority must act in accordance with the regulatory principles and any administrative determinations.

Clause 6 also makes consequential amendments to sections 30(4)(a), 49(2A) and 49A(3) of the principal Act by replacing references to section 44(2) with reference to section 44.

Clause 7 inserts Part [8]A into the principal Act. This new Part provides for the suspension and reconstitution of the integrated resource planning process. Section 45A provides for the interpretation and application of the new Part [8]A. It defines key terms, including the IRP suspension order, part of the IRP process, and period of suspension.

Section 45A also clarifies that a reconstitution of the IRP process includes the restarting of the IRP process or any part of that process. The restarting of any part of the IRP process may require the reconsideration of any obligation or deadline and the retaking of any action already taken prior to the period of suspension.

Madam Chairman, section 45A further provides that the Integrated Resource Plan in operation at the time of, or immediately prior to, the making of the IRP suspension order shall continue to be in effect until another integrated resource plan is approved and published in accordance with Part 8, after the expiration of the period of suspension. It provides that Part 8 shall have effect notwithstanding the completion of any part of the IRP process before making of an IRP suspension order.

Section 45B empowers the Minister in accordance with the powers confirmed under section 13A, to make an order to suspend and reconstitute any part of the IRP process. Before making such an order, the Minister may consult the Regulatory Authority and the TD&R licensee. The Minister must also be of the opinion that continuing the IRP process would pose a risk to the reliability, sustainability or affordability of the energy supply, or that suspension and reconstitution is necessary to ensure consistency between government policy and the proposed integrated resource plan. And that continuing the IRP process will be contrary to the public interest.

Madam Chairman, section 45B requires an IRP suspension order to specify the reasons for making the order, the period of suspension, the part or parts of the IRP process that may be reconstituted and any directions necessary for the Authority to give effect to that order. An IRP suspension order is subject to the negative resolution procedure, and section 45C provides for the duration of the suspension, providing that where the IRP process is suspended pursuant to an IRP suspension order, the IRP process shall resume whether or not reconstituted upon the expiry of the period of suspension specified in the order. The period of suspension shall not exceed two years.

Section 45C allows for the Minister to amend the period of suspension by order published in the *Gazette*, providing that the total period of suspension as amended does not exceed two years. An order amending the suspension period is not subject to section 6 of the Statutory [Instruments] Act 1977.

Madam Chairman, section 45D requires the Regulatory Authority to issue a notice before the period of suspension expires. The notice must specify when the IRP process is to resume any part or parts of the IRP process that have been reconstituted, any steps to be taken in relation to the resumption of the IRP process, and any guidance relating to that resumption.

Section 45D further provides that notice shall be sent to the TD&R licensee by registered mail or registered electronic mail and published on the official website of the Authority. A notice or guidance issued under this section is not a statutory instrument within the meaning of the Statutory Instruments Act 1977.

Section 45E provides that where the IRP process is reconstituted, the Regulatory Authority and the TD&R licensee shall act in accordance with any Ministerial declaration issued during the period of suspension.

Madam Chairman, section 45F provides for an appeal to the Supreme Court. The TD&R licensee or any other

person aggrieved by making of an IRP suspension order may appeal the order to the Supreme Court on a point of law or mixed law and fact.

Section 45F requires such an appeal to be brought within 21 days after making the order or within such shorter or longer period as the Supreme Court may allow. Unless the Supreme Court otherwise orders, an appeal shall not suspend the operation of the IRP suspension order pending determination of the appeal.

Clause 8 amends the Regulatory Authority Act 2011. Clause 8 amends the subheading under Part 2 of the Act by inserting a reference to "POWERS" so that the heading refers to both "FUNCTIONS" "AND POWERS."

Clause 8 also inserts new section 4A into the Regulatory Authority Act, 2011. Section 4A provides that a Minister shall have such powers in the public interest in respect of a regulated industry sector for which he is responsible, as are specified in the Regulatory Authority Act 2011 and in sectoral legislation.

Madam Chairman, this amendment supports the new public interest framework introduced by the Bill and ensures that ministerial powers of this nature are recognised in both the Regulatory Authority Act 2011 and in relevant sector-specific legislation, including the Electricity Act 2016.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8, inclusively?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22, I believe it is.

Mr. Scott Pearman: It is, indeed. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

My question to the Honourable Minister is at page 2 of the Bill in relation to clause 4, which contemplates inserting a new section 13A into the primary Act, namely, the Electricity Act 2016.

The newly inserted section can be seen there at clause 4, and it is going to be [section] 13A. And what it does is it gives powers to the Minister to make orders for the purposes set out in Part 8A, which follows later in the Bill. So, there is a power to make what I am going to call "a Part 8A order."

Further down under subclause (3), it says "A direction given for the purposes of subsection (2)," (so what I am calling the Part 8A order) "shall not constitute a 'Ministerial direction'" (in quotes) "under this Act ('this Act' is the primary Act) 'as defined in the Regulatory Authority Act 2011.'" And that is a reference to Ministerial directions in section 8 of the primary Act.

My question for the Honourable Minister and her team that is here today is: How is a Part 8[A] order different than a section 8 Ministerial direction? How are those two things different in her view?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8, inclusively?

Okay, I recognise the Minister. Minister, no one else has a question at this point in time.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Sure, yes. I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

And I will refer him to the Regulatory Authority Act, which I did speak to in the Statement, and also earlier. but I will reiterate. The current powers under section 8, and under the Regulatory Authority Act, speak to the fact that a Ministerial declaration published may not be given for something that is before the Authority. And so, it speaks to this in section . . . and the existing section . . . I am sure I got the right one . . . sorry, I just want to make sure I am pulling it up. Unfortunately, yes.

So, in the current, go ahead —

The Chairman: No, no, no, no.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I was just going to say, I think it is section 8 that the Minister might be looking for in the primary Act.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, but I do not have that.

Yes, it is section 8 under the primary Act. It does speak to the fact that the . . . there isn't a matter . . . it cannot be something that is the subject of a matter that is currently before the Regulatory Authority. And so, as such, an IRP and a process that is currently before the Authority and being considered would not have the ability to be impacted or governed by a Ministerial Directive that is issued at that time.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

So, to try to put that in plain English, Minister, would you agree with me that the restrictions in section 8 of the primary Act regarding what you may or may not do in relation to the Regulatory Authority are being bypassed or circumvented in a Part 8A order pursuant to clause 4? Is that . . . effectively the prior restrictions are no longer going to restrain you. Yes?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Only in relation to an IRP. That is the only instance where this, as you quote, section 8, for the purposes of this amendment, would apply.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Member, you have the floor

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And thanks to the Honourable Minister.

My next question is on page three of the Bill under clause 7.

Clause 7 is inserting a new section [after section] 45 of the principal Act, being the Electricity Act 2016. And below clause 7, the new Part 8A (that we were just talking about) is set out.

And my question relates to the powers being granted to the Minister under the new 45A, to be inserted, and more specifically, the powers that are under 45A, subsection (2), in the middle of the page, where it reads

"For the purposes of this Part—

"(a) a reconstitution of the IRP process includes the restarting of the IRP process or any part of the IRP process."

And so, my questions in relation to [45A](2)(a) read together with [45A](2)(b), which states "the restarting of any part of the process may require the reconsideration of any obligation or deadline and the retaking of any action already taken under the IRP process prior to the period of suspension; . . ."

My questions . . . I have four questions to the Minister, and I will put them all at once with your leave, Madam.

One is, effectively, the amending Act is going to grant you a power to pause for two years, and a power to effectively retake any action already taken. So that is my first question. Those are the two powers you are being given.

And my second, my third and fourth questions are in relation to each of those powers, the power to pause and the power to (in my language) negate a prior decision or retake the decision in relation to each of those powers. How does the Honourable Minister anticipate utilising those two powers?

So those are four separate questions.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

There being no other questions, I call on the Minister to provide answers to the four questions.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I do not know that I captured four, Madam [Chairman], but I did capture—

The Chairman: I can ask that the Member repeat the questions for you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I think the technical team would be thankful, if you don't mind.

The Chairman: Could you repeat the questions, maybe a little slower?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sure. Yes. I will go one at a time.

The Chairman: Yes, okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Does the Minister agree with me that 2(a) and 2(b) provide the Minister with a power to pause the IRP?

The Chairman: Okay, that is one question.
Go ahead. You can answer that question for us.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes.

The Chairman: Okay, the next question.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.
Does the Minister also agree with me that 2(a) and 2(b) read together give the power to the Minister to negate a prior decision under the IRP?

The Chairman: Okay, that is the second question.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: A prior decision. Yes. Under a proposed IRP, not an existing IRP.

The Chairman: Okay, would you like to put . . . did you get the question?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Some clarification.

The Chairman: Okay, go ahead.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: It is related to the process, not to an IRP that is currently an existing document that has effect. This is speaking to an IRP process. And so, yes, it does allow to pause and restart and considerations that were taken relating to an IRP and its process specifically.

The Chairman: Question three.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, actually that throws up a subsidiary question—

The Chairman: A question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, so I better just clarify.
I believe the Minister in drawing a distinction between IRP and IRP process in making reference to the definition in clause 2 on page one of the Bill, “integrated resource planning process” or “IRP process” and what it means there. Can I just confirm that that is what the Minister has in mind?

The Chairman: Before you put question three? Is that what you are saying, yes?
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, that is correct.

The Chairman: Thank you. Did you want—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you for that clarification, Honourable Minister.

So, moving on to the third of the four questions, then, how does the Minister anticipate using the power to pause the IRP or IRP process?

The Chairman: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: What is known is that the [National] Electricity Sector Policy of 2015, which is currently the approved Government policy, has aggressive 85 per cent renewable targets for energy transition in Bermuda.

What we know is that it also forecasted a 2035 target. And we are just short of 2035 with not having made material progress towards that 85 per cent target.

To proceed with a target, with such an aggressive transition, means that the cost relating to reviews, research, [and] technological viability studies will be done under a confined timeline which will all be compounded and at the cost of the ratepayer. That is a fact.

And so, due to that, accepting where we are in our transition, the energy policy that is being proposed seeks to right-size a transition that is more gradual in our context; that does not compromise our energy targets, but rather says, due to where we know that we are now, despite the intentions of previous policies and intentions of previous IRPs and its targets, these targets ought to be reconsidered.

And our transition in support of what only makes sense and is viable, based on the cost of living that each one of us and our constituents complain about in Bermuda and its context, is considering that as a priority on behalf of the consumer. So that is just one of the ways and one of the targets that ought to be reconsidered as currently proposed in the National Electricity Sector Policy.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thanks to the Honourable Minister.

Just trying to put that into plain English. My understanding of the answer just given by the Honourable Minister is that she anticipates using this power either to adjust the target or to delay the target or potentially both. Have I correctly understood the Minister's answer?

The Chairman: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, we will be guided by the technical input. But the policy seeks to right-size the energy transition and an IRP process as currently enshrined in the law. And the [principal] Act speaks to the fact that it ought to be considered in any IRP process planning.

The Chairman: Your question—

Mr. Scott Pearman: I think I am done.

But just in terms of the uses of the word “right-size,” does that mean either adjustment or delay? Or does it mean something else?

[Gavel]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Right-size is appropriate, as articulated in the example, to force an aggressive target in an environment where we hear every single day that the persons in the public cannot afford it. Who will be paying for the technology and its deployment, and the surveys, the consultants, under a confined and rushed time period?

To me, that is not prudent and is not appropriate, considering the strain that we already have on cost to the ratepayer and the price that we already agreed in this Honourable House is too high. And so, this process that is being considered right-size means to consider appropriately the current state that right now is not in contemplation.

The Chairman: Okay, thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8?

There being no other person, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I move that the preamble be approved. Oh no, I move that clauses 1 through 8 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 8 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There seems to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 8 passed.]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman. I move the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: You want the preamble?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Oh, no, I mean that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam [Chairman], I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So approved

[Motion carried: The Electricity Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 5:27 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 being reported at the House as printed?

An Hon. Member: Nay.

Another Hon. Member: Nay.

An Hon. Member: Nay.

The Speaker: So, there are some objections, but I do not think there is sufficient to stop it from being reported right now. But I think we should record that there were objections. Thank you.

So that matter has been brought to the House

The next item on the Order Paper, [Order] No. 7, that is being carried [forward]. [Order] No. 8, Motion to be moved by the Honourable Minister Adams, notice of which was given on 29 May 2026.

Minister, are you going to move . . . are you moving your motion now, Minister?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes Mr. Speaker.

MOTION

COMPASS POINT BUILDING APPROVAL TO PURCHASE

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now take under consideration the following Motion, notice of which was given on 29 May 2026. It is:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT, in accordance with section 2(1)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1970, this Honourable House approved the purchase of the Compass Point Building together with all land appurtenant thereto, situate at 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

None.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: All right.

Mr. Speaker there are moments in Government when the easiest decision is to do nothing. To continue operating in the same way. To continue paying the same costs year after year, and to accept existing limitations simply because that is how things have always been done.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are also moments when doing nothing has a cost. And that is the fundamental question before this Honourable House today.

This debate is not simply about the acquisition of the Compass Point Building. It is about whether Government is prepared to take a responsible step towards reducing its reliance on private rental accommodation, modernising the government estate, and creating greater financial capacity to invest in the priorities that matter most to Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, today Government spends approximately \$11 million annually on commercial office accommodation. These facilities are necessary for the delivery of public services, and leasing will continue to have an appropriate role within the government estate.

However, this proposal represents a deliberate first step towards reducing that burden. By relocating departments that are currently operating from privately leased facilities into a government-owned building, Government projects a reduction of approximately \$2 million annually in private rental expenditure. That is \$2 million every year that can be redirected over time toward roads, housing, infrastructure, environmental protection, and the services that Bermudians rely upon.

Mr. Speaker, before committing to an investment of this magnitude, a responsible government must undertake a thorough analysis of the available options and determine which approach delivers the greatest long-term value for the people of Bermuda.

The Ministry of Public Works and Environment therefore considered several options, or several approaches.

The first was the construction of a new purpose-built government facility. While a new facility could be designed specifically to meet Government's long-term needs, the reality of Bermuda's current construction environment means that this would represent the most expensive and time-consuming option. Recent industry estimates indicate that new construction can cost between approximately \$700 and \$1,000 per square foot. A comparable 81,000 square foot facility could therefore require construction costs between \$56 and \$81 million before considering land acquisition, professional fees, planning approvals, procurement and other associated costs.

In addition to the significant capital investment required, Government would continue spending approximately \$11 million annually on commercial accommodation during the many years required to design, approve, procure, and construct such a facility.

The second option was to repurpose existing government properties, including former school buildings. However, many of these properties have already been strategically allocated to important national priorities, including community services, facilities for seniors, food security initiatives, and education reform. Furthermore, converting these facilities into modern office accommodation would itself require substantial capital investment, extensive

refurbishment works and considerable time before they could be brought into service.

The third option was the acquisition of an existing structurally sound and fit-for-purpose building. After considering these options, Government determined that the acquisition of Compass Point represented the most prudent and cost-effective path forward.

The Government negotiated a purchase price of \$14.5 million, which was \$1.5 million below the valuation conducted by the Department of Land Valuation. The acquisition cost is approximately \$178 per square foot. And even after accounting for refurbishment, technology upgrades, internal fit-out, and other investments required to create a modern government facility, the total investment remains approximately \$275 per square foot.

Mr. Speaker, when compared with the cost and time required to construct a new facility or convert other government properties, it is clear why the acquisition of Compass Point represents the most practical, timely, and financially responsible option available to the Government.

Mr. Speaker, this acquisition also supports a more coordinated and efficient government. By bringing together departments with closely connected responsibilities in finance, economic development regulation, and administration, government can improve collaboration, reduce duplication, streamline processes and create a more seamless experience for the public. For the individual Bermudian or business owner, this means less time navigating multiple government locations, improved coordination between departments, and a government that is better structured to respond to their needs. That is why modernising the government estate is not simply about buildings. It is about creating a public service that is better equipped to serve the people of Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the most important benefits of this acquisition is one that may not be immediately obvious to the public.

For many years Government has faced a significant challenge in modernising its existing estate. The issue has not simply been identifying buildings that require refurbishment. The issue has been finding suitable accommodation where departments can be temporarily relocated while those works are carried out. The reality is simple: you cannot effectively undertake major refurbishment works while an entire government department remains fully operational within the same building. And the purchase of Compass Point changes that.

It provides the swing space necessary to temporarily decant departments from ageing facilities allowing government to undertake comprehensive upgrades in a safer more efficient and more cost-effective manner. Once completed, departments can return to those facilities that are better designed for modern technology, accessibility, collaboration, and improved public service.

In that sense Compass Point is not the end of the government estate strategy. It is the enabling step that allows the strategy to move forward. It unlocks Government's ability to transform ageing facilities, improve the working

environment of our public officers and provide the public with government facilities that are fit for the future.

Mr. Speaker, I recognise that some Bermudians will ask whether these resources should instead be directed towards roads and housing and addressing the cost of living. However, responsible leadership requires us to do two things at once—or multiple things at once.

We must continue addressing the needs of Bermudians today while also making strategic investments that strengthen Government's ability to address those challenges tomorrow. By reducing private rental expenditure, managing public assets strategically, and improving the efficiency of government operations, we create greater financial flexibility for future investments in the priorities that matter most to our people.

Mr. Speaker, no single decision will solve every challenge facing Bermuda. However, it is a practical decision that places Government in a stronger position to address those challenges over the long term.

The easiest decision before this Honourable House is to preserve the status quo, to continue paying the same costs, occupying the same buildings, and accepting the same limitations simply because that is how things have always been done. But the responsibility of leadership is not simply to maintain what we inherited. The responsibility of leadership is to make the decisions necessary to build what comes next.

This Government believes that Compass Point represents such a decision. Not because it is the easiest decision, but because it is the more responsible one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister,

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

MP King—

Mr. Robert King: Go ahead, Vance. I will go after you.

The Speaker: MP Campbell.

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your presentation

Mr. Speaker, the concept that Government should own the properties that it occupies versus renting makes sense. It makes sense in the short-term, and it makes sense in the long-term. From a long-term perspective, the money spent on renting usually is far greater than the cost to maintain a building.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, during my time as the general manager of the Bermuda Housing Corporation, I did recommend that the Corporation buy a facility so that it will cease paying rent itself and also garner rental income from the floors not being used directly. It did not happen while I was there, but it did happen a few years later. So, it makes sense.

I do have some questions for the Minister that should be easy for him to answer.

We do take the Minister at his word that the sales price or the agreed price, sorry, is \$1.5 million below the valuation. I do agree with the Minister that there are other uses that could be made of these funds. But you can say that at every moment in time in a government's day-to-day operations there are competing . . . there are competing interests for the funds that are available.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Vance Campbell: But this opportunity to purchase a building does not come along every day.

I deduce from the Minister's comments either today or last week, I believe he made a statement as well two weeks ago, that a structural survey was done. And again, we trust . . . not having had sight of that, we trust that—and well, we do have some questions. Were there any deficiencies in the structure that will require remediation before the Government can utilise the structure? Has it sat empty, Minister, for any length of time? I only ask because we know, particularly from a plumbing perspective, a building can deteriorate quicker not being used than when it is used. And this may have come out in this . . . a report by a structural engineer.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Minister, Where do we sit or do we have any government leases that have expired on rented properties or are about to expire making those particular departments that are renting those spaces prime candidates for the first move? Or is there an overall plan, coordinated plan that ties in the synergies of departments that work together?

So also questions that I would have are, When does the Minister anticipate the building will be complete . . . I mean, the purchase will be complete, and the building will be ready for occupancy? And as it relates to using the building to move departments, to renovate their existing accommodations, has consideration been given to only moving that department once as opposed to moving them, causing disruption (not only to the employees but the service to the public), and then moving them again back to their old common accommodations? Has any consideration been given to moving them once, and basically that is your permanent home, and someone else moves into, or another government department moves into the space that you vacated?

In the structural engineers' report (I assume one was done) in addition to identifying any areas for remediation in that report, has Government been able to garner information about the remaining useful life of the Compass Point Building?

So again, Mr. Speaker, this is a large purchase, but it is one that makes financial sense and we support.

Thank you

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King.

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

Just a couple of observations. In terms of the Compass Point Building, it was on the market April 2024, and I know that we had the recent Budget Debate, and there was no mention of an intention to purchase this building. And the concern that I think we all would have is the monies being allocated or utilised for the purchase of this, where is that going to come from?

An Hon. Member: Supplement.

Mr. Robert King: The other—supplement, okay.

An Hon. Member: Sure.

Mr. Robert King: And understanding that this is all part of good governance, making sure that we have buildings fit for purpose, it does not seem as though, barring what my colleague here was saying, is that there was proper foresight and planning to ensure that we would not have to ask for a supplemental but that it would be part of the regular budgetary allocations for capital acquisitions that would be expected, understanding the state of disrepair of many of the government buildings that are currently out there.

So, I take a slightly different tack from my colleague here. Ordinarily, owning your own building is good. [It] is a good thing because you would think that, you know, you are not giving rent to somebody else, you are able to invest in your own properties. But what we have seen is that the current administration does not maintain its own infrastructure. So, there is a fear that we have a brand-new building, and if we are to rely upon what history has told us, it is only a matter of time before Compass Point ends up like many of these derelict and abandoned buildings around town.

So, there is a concern that this can be an opportunity for the building to be used responsibly, maintained, and repaired as required.

The other question that I have is understanding that the Department of Child and Family Services is currently paying approximately \$919,000 a year in rent for 131 Front Street. The Deputy Premier can declare his interest. And also, HM Customs currently pays \$447,000 per year. Is it expected that these two departments will be moving into the new building? And what other departments will be moving into this building, understanding that the rents currently being paid are north of \$11 million? We want to make sure that we are getting good value for the purchase of this building.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, just a few questions on this.

I fully concur and agree that a long-term plan is the right way to go as far as I have always felt that we needed

to move the offices in a centralised area. The unintended consequence of that is people having to go back and forth from one building to another parish just to get forms printed, creating challenges. And many of the people who are having to get some of the assistance that is needed can ill afford to have to be travelling all over the place, trying to get a copy of this and a copy of that. And they got to go all over the land even down as far as Southside to get things done. So, I am in favour of the purchase of the building.

I do have some questions as far as timing. I mean, we are in a building right now that we could have got for a steal, and we are still paying rent. But we should have bought it. It has been here, we have been here for a long time. We could have certainly reduced our rents with the price that we could have purchased this building up for. And I talk with some knowledge of what was going on, and having several chats with the former owner, the Honourable Member that graced our Chambers as well.

So the timing. I am . . . okay, why didn't we? So, now we are going to buy a building. So, what is the exception of that? We have, and I get the fact that cost is high, but if you are waiting for cost to go down, you probably will not be a Member of Parliament by that time. So, the cost is always going to go up, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, you know, now is the time. We have got . . . I call it the Brazilian Pepper Museum of the old prison office there.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mexican Pepper, Brazilians, and all of that. I mean, that was what—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, you know, that has been like what, eight years—maybe more. We had opportunity. We can build on these things. So, we have got the property, but all of a sudden, now we are going to jump in and purchase this massive building, which is, as I said, I agree we should be doing this. But we have got other opportunities.

If Government is not going to lead in building on its own infrastructure or even buy the buildings that it is already renting in like what we are here in now, why would the private sector say, *Well, you know . . .* But the private sector is building . . . at the cost of construction and per square foot now.

So, to me it does not . . . it is not adding up to say that, *Well, with the cost of the construction today, we are just going to wait it out.* Well, good luck with that. Because eight years ago, we could have built a building, and it was much less.

So, you know, is there a plan to move? What departments are we looking at—or maybe we have not gotten to that point, but certainly there is a plan in place that Public

Works has. It has been working on plans for some time now. There have been other opportunities to buy other buildings. I do not know maybe it is because of the CIT that we are now saying, *Well, yes, you know we can go ahead and buy a building*. Maybe that is the case. I do not know.

Let us hear from the Minister. Let him substantiate why this building, as opposed to the building that we are in right now—great opportunity to buy from a local, home-grown guy . . . his property. I do not know who owns it now, but well . . . I should not say that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: They certainly do not look like me.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: When we had an opportunity to buy the building. So . . . I am just saying, we should have bought the building. No, no objections at all to it.

With this building now, I understand with renovations, are we going to be making this state-of-the-art when it comes to technology? That is going to cost money to do that. So, I know that the Minister is saying that they weighed out the cost of building as opposed to renovating, but I do not know if we are planning on putting any fancy stuff in there or not. And are we planning on occupying the whole building in and of itself? Maybe we are looking to rent some of that part. I have not heard that from the Minister as well.

I am glad to hear that he, they negotiated for it. I believe he said at least a million less than—

Hon. Jache Adams: [It's] \$1.5 [million].

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, \$1.5 [million] less.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Just curious though, was there any other bids that were on the table for less than this that were out there that were being entertained before Government came along?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I do not know. You would know. We all know this. I am—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You know, if I am asking you a question, I must know a little something that is going on.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I thought you would have presumed that when I get up and ask a question.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I mean it is fine to say that you are getting [it] for less than the surveyed price. But I think that probably [there] were some agreements that were in play already for less. Who knows? Maybe you should check it out. You might be able to get a better price, Minister. It ain't too late. We are still discussing it in motion to adjourn *[sic]*. Well . . . on this motion.

Check it out, please, Minister. Maybe you can come back with a better figure. It would be wonderful to see that.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And I would also like to know, with this purchase . . . obviously, are we also looking at any other properties at this time? Because I do not know, I mean, I recognise that we have got about what a little over a thousand civil servants who are eligible for retirement, so are we going to . . . I don't know, if they are going to be able to replace them now. You are having a jobs forum coming up where we know it is difficult to fill these, a lot of these jobs.

And I do not know as of today where that figure will be, as far as the total number of civil servants who fall under Government. But it would be interesting to hear about what the plan is in the future of how many people will this building house, if you have thought that out? Obviously, you are thinking about the number of people, displacing them, where they are likely to come from, and what ministries. So that will be important as well.

And at what . . . is there an estimated date? Since it sounds as if a lot of work has been done, at what point are we looking at occupying the actual building itself and seeing the benefit of having our own people within the building in and of itself.

Again, we are supportive of this purchase. But it certainly does not come without questions on the broader scale of where you want to take this.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Just a very, very quick question for the Minister, and I do apologise, I should know the answer to this.

There was a time when we tabled things. We actually tabled them, and I could have walked up to the table and taken a look. I have taken a quick look at your Ministerial Statement of 29 May [2026].

But my question is simply this: I know that the property is the big building there. I know just up the hill on Gorham Road behind, or to the west (if it is west) is the car park as well. And I believe that both were for sale and I was

just curious if the Government has bought the car park as well.

Thank you.

The Speaker: [Does] any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Everybody on this side is in support, so . . .

[Laughter]

The Speaker: So, are you speaking for this side?

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I would not want to spoil it up. I think it is . . . Mr. Speaker, good afternoon and good afternoon to the public

Mr. Speaker, a few years ago I had spoken to the then Minister of Works and just asked a question as to what we are paying in rents. He told me the number. And then I looked at who owned all the buildings.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I was like, *hmmm*.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: *Hmmm*. I do not know exactly, you know, maybe somebody in here owns a building or two, I do not know. But the point—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The point being, Mr. Speaker, is that as a Labour Party, who are now Government . . .

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: It was before that, but anyway.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: As a Labour Party paying rents . . . as a Labour Party in Government paying rents to folks that do not support you, I think it fundamentally does not make sense.

But be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I think I can safely say the government, the Progressive Labour Party Government is turning the corner when it comes to owning buildings and building houses. I am tying the two in because we do not want . . . just as we do not want the Government to be paying unnecessary rent, we do not want our people out in public to be paying unnecessary rent—you have got to pay. It is just a matter of what you are going to

pay and if, at the end of the day, you are going to have some equity. If at the end of the day, you are going to have the ability to buy something for yourself.

So, I fully support the Minister. And as we transition out of other people's buildings, if we still have other people left, we need to look at either building our own, or buying another one.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly, thank you to honourable colleagues for their contribution and what appears to be strong support for said acquisition.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: For the record. For the record strong support is what . . . I said strong support, huh? Can we get that? Okay, strong support.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: So, let us just tackle a few questions that were asked.

It will sort of be a bit random, but to MP Pearman's question about the car park. Yes, and the . . . so the car park was included and certainly a part of the purchase price.

MP Campbell did ask, sort of, What deficiencies are in the building? Most notably, there are some roof leaks that were identified. But those . . . and the need, sorry, and the need to repair or replace said roof was factored into the purchase price. So, it was known.

Do we have any government, sorry, so what is . . . or, When is the purchase going to be complete and the completion of the moves? So, the purchase is aimed for the end of July 2026, subject to approval . . . to complete the transaction and the initial occupancy is expected at December of 2026. There is expected [to be] a few months to do some, as I mentioned, some technology upgrades, some internal fit-outs, and the like, but certainly expected to be . . . or the initial occupancy is scheduled for, just as I said, December of 2026.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Pardon?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: No comment there. No comment there.

Do we have any government leases that have expired, leases which are moving in? So yes, we do, and they

are considered in the overall plan. It includes the synergistic move to have the site as a financial hub. So as an example, financial-related departments . . . it is designed to have them all under the same roof, in the same particular department.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: So what departments, sorry, . . . do we have any . . . sorry. In the structural engineer's report, did the report indicate the remaining useful life? The building has been well-maintained and is in excellent shape. With the proper maintenance, it is expected to last at least an additional 50 years.

I think it was MP King who spoke about, you know, the upkeep of this particular building. I think it is important to understand and note that we have a significant capital budget, and so you will note that we have already begun the process of investing in what will be deemed underutilised buildings. You could look at St David's, which used to be the St David's Post Office, that is now the St David's or the East End Coast Guard Station. You could look at the work that we are doing up in Somerset for the Mangrove Bay Clinic. These are examples of us now being in a position to invest in our capital assets.

And so, with the transition of departments moving in and . . . sorry, with the acquisition providing the swing space for us to now decant, it gives us the ability now with the capital funding that we have to invest in . . . to leave . . . the assets. It now, with the capital budget that we have, we are now in a space where we can make material Investments in not only upkeeping our current stock but also investing in these new properties as well.

Is the Government looking at any other properties? The Ministry is always looking for good prospects that provide value for money for the Government. You will know that we get proposals, whether it is properties, or whatever it is, there is always opportunities that are put before this Government. And we do our appropriate analysis and thus make a decision. And so, we did the same approach with this particular opportunity. It was deemed to be the right time for us and the right conditions for us to make said acquisition. And we are looking to move forward with it. So absolutely, there is an opportunity for us—sorry, we get opportunities all the time. We will do those assessments. So it would be, you know, incorrect for us to say that the buck stops here. You know, we will continue to look at opportunities and when there are ones or those that provide good value for the people then we will look to analyse it further and perhaps execute.

And I think I am at the end, Mr Speaker. And so, with that I move that the motion be approved.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Are you trying to get your Minister's attention?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I will . . . I continue—

[Crosstalk and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: I will continue to move that the motion be approved, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]

Hon. Jache Adams: I got you.

The Speaker: Get that one finished.

Hon. Jache Adams: You and I can always have a separate conversation. But we are on board together.

The Speaker: Okay. Good.

An Hon. Member: We are on board.

The Speaker: Okay. The Minister has moved the motion and there has been no objections to the motion. Just drawing that note for the record. There is no objection to the motion.

There is some conversation, but no objections.
Thank you.

[Motion carried: The House approved the purchase of the Compass Point Building together with all land appurtenant thereto, situate at 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke.]

The Speaker: That now brings us to a close of the Orders for today.

We would like to do our third readings now.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to [move the] Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

None. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Okay, the Bill has been read the third time by its title only and is now passed. *[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]*

[Motion carried: The Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

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

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that the said Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

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

[Motion carried: The Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: The next would be the Minister of Home Affairs.

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

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Electricity Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

An Hon. Member: Objections.

Another Hon. Member: Objections.

The Speaker: Objections are noted.

BILL

THIRD READING

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move that the Bill entitled the Electricity Amendment Act 2026 be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

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

[Motion carried: The Electricity Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, 26 June [2026] at 10:00 am.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, far beyond me to get in between—

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Mr. Famous, I thought you spoke briefly just earlier, so we can get out early.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I am saying something in brief, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay then, that's fine.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Far beyond me to get in between people and their partying.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: You have your two minutes, sir.

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

BACKBENCHERS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

Mr. Christopher Famous: My entire elected political life. I have served as a Backbencher—

The Speaker: Aha.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —and part of the role as a Backbencher is to be supportive of Ministers even when they are veering too right or too left, you be supportive and you help reign them back in.

Last night, Mr. Speaker, we were invited, cajoled, forced . . . to a meeting down in St. David's. Southside, St. David's to be precise. And we faced the people of St. David's when we were talking about bringing a project down there. And it was a learning lesson for all of us there because the people of St. David's expressed historical angst on situations.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I want to give kudos to the Minister who was at the bat, taking some hard balls coming to him, and kept his composure, and helped to inform the people. Now there might have to be some little bit of compromise going on, here and there. But the point I am getting at, Mr. Speaker, is when you have an issue as important as housing, there are going to be sensitivities all around. And no matter whether it is us as the Government, or the OBA as Government, you have to deal with people face on, because that's when they . . . once they come at you, and you stand your ground, and you work with them, they respect you even more,

Likewise, another Minister I support, Minister Alexa Lightbourne. I listened to a radio clip where she faced the fire of some unknown persons calling into a radio show, people writing all sorts of innuendos on social media, and she has stood her ground with grace and informed the people.

So, I say to anyone who is a Backbencher now, or Backbencher in the future, right, part—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I have got your spot for you right here!

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Keep talking this way.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, whoever is a Backbencher, right, the majority of parliamentarians are not going to be in Cabinet. But the point is that it is about supporting your Ministers and helping to guide them when they need their guidance.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish everybody a happy [National] Heroes Day, and a happy Carnival, and as MP Jarion [Richardson] would say, let us do this responsibly so people do not get the calls that they should not get.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Happy Sabbath, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Sure. Thank you for keeping it short. Minister Furbert, are you rising for a brief moment?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes.

The Speaker: You have the floor.

AUTISM: CHALLENGES FACING FAMILIES AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT INITIATIVES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, while we are anticipating celebrating [National] Heroes weekend, I just want to first start by saying Happy [National] Heroes weekend. And I wish everyone a safe holiday.

Mr. Speaker. I do want to take the opportunity to address three topics.

Last weekend, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to meet with parents who have children who are on the autism spectrum. And they invited me to their monthly "Chat and Chew" that they have and it was an opportunity to hear the challenges that they experience with their journey raising a child who has autism challenges, from access to assessments, challenges to access to getting timely reports. Challenges to even having access to those assessments and professionals locally. Challenges with having access to speech-language therapy, occupational therapy, and physiotherapy. Challenges with the support professionals within the school system. And so, we discussed and they shared those challenges with us. But I just want to take the opportunity to just share from where we were to where we are today.

Our public school systems at one point, Mr. Speaker, did not have specialised autism programmes. We did not have them at all. And so, we now have a number of them from preschool all the way up to senior school now, and that is something we did not have before.

I also want to take the opportunity to praise and thank Tomorrow's Voices that provides a significant amount of support to that population and to the parents as well. And so that is another programme that has significantly developed over the number of years as well, providing support and services to children and adults with ASD.

I would also like to acknowledge the team of the Office of Youth Affairs as well. And they have expanded their services with their after-school programming to support children that have ASD. And I just want to congratulate them for training the staff. The staff does yearly training to make sure that they are as equipped as they can be with providing support to children and parents, so that we can include children who are on the autism spectrum. Because it is not an easy task. It is not for the faint of people particularly when dealing with behavioural concerns that can sometimes be associated with ASD. And so, I do want to acknowledge the Office of Youth Affairs for embracing this vision. And we look forward to our programming and support for the parents of children with ASD as we go into the

summer, because we will be providing summer programming.

DEPUTY GOVERNORS AND PUBLIC SERVICE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Moving on, Mr. Speaker, this . . . was it . . . Thursday. Thursday, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend the [Overseas Territories] Deputy Governors [and Heads of Public Service Summit]. Yes. And where we had representatives from the different Caribbean countries, Deputy Governors from the different Caribbean countries, where they had the opportunity to speak to the challenges that they were having themselves within the civil service.

But what was interesting to see, Mr. Speaker, is which . . . you know, Bermuda has a Governor and Bermuda has a Deputy Governor and there is very rarely an opportunity where you get to see—and please do not take this comment the wrong way, but it was good to see the representation of Black people as Deputy Governors in the . . . serving as Deputy Governors for the other Caribbean Overseas Territories.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, yes.

And it was good to learn about the similarities and issues that we commonly share as small island jurisdictions and how they work alongside each other in dealing with the issues of recruitment and sustaining public servants in the civil service. So, it was a good opportunity to see the inter-relationships between the Caribbean countries.

CARICOM: FULL MEMBERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AND BENEFITS FOR BERMUDA

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Moreover, Mr. Speaker, I want to also just speak to a bit of . . . CARICOM. And just like MP Famous mentioned, there was a short segment of a radio talk show in which Minister Alexa [Lightbourne] was speaking about CARICOM. And it was just very interesting the comments that were coming into the radio station. And a lot of those comments were around what are CARICOM's benefits to Bermuda.

And quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to speak to the value of Bermuda and Bermuda's contributions to CARICOM. Because Bermuda has value and Bermuda can make contributions. We have, a lot of the times, the Caribbean countries or the Overseas Territories visiting Bermuda because Bermuda has demonstrated development in the area of international business or financial sector. Bermuda has demonstrated development of a water system or a waste management system that these other countries want to see. Bermuda has development, particularly with the water system, the structure of our roofs, Mr. Speaker, and how we collect our water which a lot of countries would die to have, you know, how we were able to

construct our roofs so that we could collect water, so that we do not have to worry about water if we have sufficient rainfall.

Mr. Speaker, with the development now that we have heard yesterday, or this week, with the development of the subsea cables, we are setting direction. We are also setting direction in the development of digital assets and digital financing. Mr. Speaker.

So, while we want to talk about everything that might not be so good, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to CARICOM, Bermuda indeed has value, and its people have value to be able to contribute to the whole CARICOM picture.

Taking us back to when I had brought information to this House in regard to the United Nations Development Fund and our relationship with UNDP [United Nations Development Programme]. It was not an easy task, Mr. Speaker, to get Bermuda recognised to be a part of that programme. And partly because of how they looked at Bermuda's GDP and Bermuda's value financially.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: There were also many programmes, Mr. Speaker, that Bermuda could not partake in because we were not full membership. I remember attending a SIDS [Small Island Developing States] conference and going to different side events and they would share in these side events, Mr. Speaker, the grants that were available to countries that had full membership of CARICOM. And because Bermuda was an associate member, we did not have access to these grants. And I thought, wow, if our people could have access to these grants—so that they can get training in the area of tourism, or they can get training in the area of creative arts, and many other grants that were available—those would be awesome benefits that could be available to our people.

But the conversation, it is not . . . it has turned into one of, in my opinion, racist comments and comments about crime when our Caribbean nation's brothers and sisters . . . we are more than the topic of racism, Mr. Speaker. We are more than the topic of crime, Mr. Speaker. We . . . we, Mr. Speaker, have contributed much to the development of our people within the Caribbean countries. And so, while I would like to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, that CARICOM will follow a process, a track, the Minister has come out, time after time after time again in regard to the introduction of the Green Paper, which we have already said. And then we will introduce a White Paper, Mr. Speaker.

There are many steps and processes in—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr Speaker, this is disrespectful.

The ones that write, they write articles all the time about the benefits of CARICOM.

Mr. Speaker, there are many steps and processes, and we must respect the process, Mr. Speaker. We must respect the process. And so, I want to applaud Minister Alexa [Lightbourne] and her team—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —for the work in which they are doing, and they will continue to do, to share and to answer questions, to share the relevance and benefits of CARICOM. Because, Mr Speaker, it is not everything bad. Bermuda deserves the opportunity to be recognised for the good work, and the good deeds that it does, and Bermuda has value.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to share the contributions that we, as a country, can share as we go along this journey of seeking more information about becoming full members of CARICOM.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other—MP DeCouto, you have the floor.

HOLIDAY WEEKEND AND WARWICK WORKMAN'S CLUB FAMILY FUN DAY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good evening, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, obviously, I wish everybody in Bermuda a happy holiday weekend, a safe holiday weekend

Number two, Saturday the 20th, we will be hosting a Family Fun Day in Warwick from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm at Warrick Workman's Club. So, I am just trying to get the word out.

An Hon. Member: Come on, PLP.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Number three, Mr. Speaker and this topic is not very fun.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Free food, yes, that is for the prior topic. No free food for the new topic.

PREMIER'S REPORTING OBLIGATIONS TO PARLIAMENT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Six months ago today, Mr. Speaker I professionally and collegially invited the Premier to rectify some oversights and provide reports to this House that were legally required. Six months today.

Now, while he has presented some, we are still in arrears by three years of reports. These are the reports for the Premier's, Ministers' and Opposition Leaders' staff, i.e., who are the political people that they hired, who they were, what they are getting paid, and what they were doing. As we have already covered (but I have the privilege to cover it again), required by law to make this report.

And his last correspondence to me, which I quoted two weeks ago, is that he is electing not to.

I do not know about you, Mr. Speaker, and I do not speak for you, but as a Member of this House, I personally find that very disrespectful to me as a Member of Parliament. And I obviously cannot speak on behalf of other parliamentarians. But what kind of operation is it?

I see the Premier's making a come-along, come-along now.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am not talking to you!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: What kind of operation is it, Mr. Speaker, where the leaders of this country can pick and choose what laws they want to follow?

I think it is embarrassing, and I think the Front Bench should hold him accountable. And they should be embarrassed. And I do not know how you were raised, Mr. Speaker, but the way I was raised, you could learn a lot—

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You can learn a lot about a person by the way they handle the little things, Mr. Speaker. You can learn a lot.

And I am going to make a contrast, and I know we are not going to get into Sir John [Swan], today. But we can certainly look at his role as Premier, and you could say he transformed the country. And many Bermudians' lives were transformed. And we look back at the leadership of this . . . I am going to just use the word "so-called" (in my opinion), Mr. Speaker, so-called leader—

The Speaker: Don't, don't, don't, don't—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Because a leader leads to—

Hon. E. David Burt: Come on.

The Speaker: Well, you were okay, but that one word—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: All right. Well, let me rewind, let me rewind—

The Speaker: Yes, just restate that, please.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Let me rewind. And if we look back at the record, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: One little word can turn a good track off.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh, yes, you are right. Sorry. You are right.

The Speaker: You are on a good track.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You are right.

Like I said, you can learn a lot about a person by the way they handle the little things. And if they cannot even

give you the respect to do the little things right, is it any surprise that the big things are not being done right?

And I said I felt disrespected. I think the people of Bermuda should feel disrespected that the Premier seems to be picking and choosing which laws he wants to follow. And I discussed in our prior session how that must feel for somebody who is stuck dealing with planning and getting in trouble for not getting some arcane piece of law right.

And then I talked about the little things and what they mean about the big things. And I talked about Sir John, whose leadership transformed lives. And if you cannot get the little things right, you are not getting the big things right.

What are the big things not getting right here? And that if I was leader of the country right now, I would be embarrassed about: education in shambles.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You won't have to worry about that now.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I hear a lot of laughing. I know the people who are listening to this now, whose children are in the public school system do not think it is very funny.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Health care system in shambles. And I know those people who have family members waiting in line in the hallways in the emergency room do not think it is funny.

People dying on the roads for infrastructure not maintained, shambles. Shrinking population—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker the Honourable Member is misleading House and misleading the public. He is talking about the state of roads causing deaths in this country is way offline. It is way offline.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, it is not.

The Speaker: Ah—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Really?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Really.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Really?

An Hon. Member: Really?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The state of the roads are causing deaths in this country?

An Hon. Member: Really?

Another Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Put your microphone on and say that. Put your microphone on and say it for the record.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Member was stating his viewpoint. Let him just finish on his viewpoint. If he goes too far off the line, of course, I will pull him back in but let him finish his viewpoint.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Like I said, Mr. Speaker, the state of the roads is shambolic. The shrinking population is shambolic.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The local population is shrinking; that is the legacy of the individual leading this Government, who cannot even be bothered to file the reports that Parliament requires.

And I look at the whole front bench, and I ask, *Is that the behaviour you support?* Because we know the way a person deals with their little things is how they deal with their big things.

I look at the back bench, conceptually speaking, and I ask them the same questions: *Will you hold your leader accountable to follow the law, and to treat this House with respect and the people of Bermuda with respect? And will you do what is required to get the results this country needs?* Because I am not seeing it.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . MP Swan.

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

[Inaudible interjection]

PREMIER'S LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNMENT'S FISCAL RECORD, SUPPORT FOR

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I had no intention of speaking this evening

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But sometimes you just got to just come to the wicket.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I listened intently. And I certainly have learned over the many years to read between the lines. There's a saying that I learned in Opposition [there] is a lot that can slip between the cup and lip. Certainly, a lot can be gleaned by what is not being said.

I have run three elections since 2017 under the premiership of Mr. E. David Burt, a premiership that will come to a conclusion in October. I have been around a long time, and I just want to say that it's very easy, particularly in Opposition, to be irresponsible, because you don't have the opportunity at that particular time to run the Government. So, what you say, what you imply, what you insinuate is part of a strategy. And I know that an Opposition that has plenty of money at its personal discretion certainly has the type of persons advising that will tell you what to say, what buttons to push.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

We are not going to let him go too far with this speech.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House, insinuating all kinds of things. How in the world can he speak to a party that he has no understanding of what's going on behind the scenes? He might with the UBP, because he was a member there.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But certainly not the OBA, its finances, and who is advising. And to insinuate improper motive of getting advice to do whatever to the Government is just wrong. He's misleading the House. It's unnecessary.

The Speaker: Okay.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Member, just be. . . I am cautioning everybody today, because I don't want us to get too off track anyway. Everybody has been short.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I'm not getting off track.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: No, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

I reeled him in not to go, because he started to go down a road, and I pulled him back on when he started to go personal. And I am just going to advise everybody; it's been quite a good day today. We have had short speeches on the motion to adjourn. Everyone seems to want to leave at a reasonable time. But if we go down the wrong road, it's going to incite us to stay longer.

So just be mindful of how far we go over that edge.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I believe the Opposition Whip protests this too much. Nobody knows better than me that I am not a member of the OBA.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Nobody knows better than me that the records of the UBP ended up . . . didn't end up with me when I ran, when I stood and served my term out as I was elected, as I promised the people. I wouldn't change my name to be and act the same way as I saw other people act. And that is a fact, Mr. Speaker. So, the Opposition Whip is going down a road that I have no intentions of going to-night. But, you know?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member again is misleading the House. He's saying he didn't intend to go down that road. He instigated the road. He paved the road. He put the lights on the road just now.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay, okay.

[Inaudible interjection, laughter and desk thumping]

An Hon. Member: He's complaining about the road we paved. And he's saying we ain't paved the road.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Make up your mind.

Another Hon. Member: That's a UBP road.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: MP, speak to the Chair.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I think, I know this much. I had a lot of experience being in Opposition. But the one thing I did, I gave respect and deference and learned

from the greatest Opposition this country had for 30 years, who came to this country with solutions that the Government that I was a part of took.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know better than me that that is the truth, that many a Government Bill that came to the House was because of an Opposition, a PLP Opposition, putting forward recommendations.

And I know from where I sit what I see. And I'm entitled to interpret. I am entitled to my opinion on what I see from an Opposition.

Now, I was just getting ready before the Honourable Member . . . and I think he probably knew where I was going, so he wanted to sort of take me off the track. But I won't be deterred. I was going to speak because at that particular time I was standing in support of a leader who I have worked with since 2017. And I have always been a person that supported the leadership that led me. Let me make it clear.

I have always . . . I have served several different leaders in my life in politics. And I have supported . . . and I have never undermined not one leader that I served under. That's probably why I was the leader of the Senate in the Opposition for three different leaders for nine years, because I know what it is to come to a House and respect the person who's leading and not undermine them.

And I certainly know where many bodies are buried in this country over a long period of time. And I am not going there today.

But I am going to tell you what, I am just going to speak to the record since 2017 of the persons in the Opposition [who] come here and very cleverly, very cleverly (and I give them credit for it, right?)—and that's what they are supposed to do—come here and tickle up the Government.

An Hon. Member: Tickle up.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And they are trying. And they try week after week.

But you know what, Mr. Speaker? Not too dissimilar to the recession that came in 2007 that the then Opposition blamed on the PLP, yes. And most of the people in the country thought that XL went down to [\$]2 because of PLP policies, AIG changed their name to Chartis because of PLP policies. Madoff . . . Madoff made off, and Stanford made off, and all these, and British American went out of business. All this bad stuff was happening because of the PLP.

And, Mr. Speaker, that's what Oppositions do.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And that's what people do. They buy into what you can say that tickles their fancy.

But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I was around and saw what had to be done during the recession. A Government had a choice to turn its back on people or put out a safety net. In Opposition, I did see the PLP go into deficit spending during 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11, 2011/12, and

go into deficit spending. Why? Because a recession came, not of their doing, but of a global doing.

I saw a PLP Government in 2021 . . . 2020, a Government that I was a part of, roll up its sleeve and come to the assistance of the people of this country in an unprecedented way. I saw a Government in 2017/18, make a commitment to prudent physical discipline in order to pay down the debt, and was on course to do that. How do you do that? With balanced budgets. On course to do it, until what? A global pandemic struck this country, and then we had to change course.

At the same time, I saw Southampton Princess no longer. And we . . . and I'm not going into the why's and the wherefore's. I'll save it for somebody else who might want to be in a contribution and support what I'm saying. I saw persons not support the Government's actions to make decisions to cause the Princess to be . . . inject hundreds of millions of dollars into this economy, which has been so up until now, and now we are looking and asking when is it going to be open? I hope it's soon. And yes, decisions had to be made. Choices were made by some people that didn't support that. Okay?

So, I'm here to say that it's easy. And I've seen the leader that I support called everything. Every . . . you think of it. And you know what? I see the same thing happening all over again. I know this: There isn't a PLP leader, present, past, or the future, who would meet the standards of conservative Bermuda. Let me repeat myself. You'll love them right up until . . . you'll love them right up until they become the PLP leader. And then, my friend, let me remind everybody the course of action changes. And the whisper campaigns. A lot can slip between a cup and a lip. Oh, yes, my bye. I've been around.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I'm just saying that the fact that this PLP Government, for the benefit of this country, set a course of more fiscal discipline spending in order to cause us to be in a projected position to pay down the debt.

And you know what? I remember, and, you know, I play a sport. I am a professional athlete. I don't have to talk about mine at all today, but I can tell you what any great athlete would tell you, and anyone aspiring to be one, it's the time you put in the nets. It's the time you put into practice. You make your successful day by hard work ahead of time. The harder you work, the luckier you sometimes can get. And I am sure the Opposition Leader would know a little bit about that. Somebody says, *Boy, that person was lucky and won*. And he would know how hard they practiced when no one else was working.

Well, had this Government not been acting in a fiscally disciplined manner when our luck happened, that corporate income tax came to our benefit, we wouldn't be paying down the debt, some \$600 million in January, would we? We would be just playing catch-up, wouldn't we? Because of our actions, our deeds, the same persons.

Let me tell you something. If the person that . . . and I walked down because I was going to say the Member was imputing improper personal motives on the Premier. That's what got me to leave up top and come back down

here, because it was wrong. Because let me tell you something. The current Premier, Honourable E. David Burt, is the Finance Minister. Not too dissimilar to who? A former leader of the country who held the post of Finance Minister as well. May or may not have kept it the whole time that he was Leader, but I do believe that the late Sir David Gibbons did so. And he said, *I'll let the record speak for [itself]*.

Let me tell you this. Had Mr. E. David Burt been overseas representing Bermuda in any financial platform that he's done over the last five years, in a way that was detrimental to the economic success of the number one breadwinner of this country, we would not have had to be coming up here trying to cause innuendos. They would have led that charge. But they haven't had to, have they? Not one dickie bird. Because he's done a good job representing all of us.

And so, when I hear . . . and you know, like . . . man, I have been . . . my Troy lost to the Mountaineers. I've been up in the mountains of West Virginia and Virginia. I know what it's like up there. I was hoping we'd get a piece of them, us country boys from down in Alabama, but we didn't. They got a piece of us.

But as I know a little bit about where I've walked in life, Mr. Speaker. I know a little bit about all of that. And so sometimes I can *feel* what's trying to be conveyed. And I just felt it necessary to say in the three terms that I've run . . . and it wasn't a person that was my choice at the beginning, but I support leadership. And I would encourage, if there's anything that I can convey upon anybody that's aspiring to get into politics, who's in politics, who's learning to learn the way, learn how to be a team. I'm a team player when it came to leading my Trojans back in the 1970s. Learn to be a team. There's a lot in that. And learn that sometimes your foe can prey upon a crack in your arsenal. No pun intended, but they won the league this year.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: But I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that as I heard that, I just wanted to say, just as . . . and I coined the phrase that he used to say all the time. And there are two persons who had sayings back then that I used to appreciate. The Honourable Simmons says, I speak on behalf, I represent the workers. *I speak on behalf of the workers*. I hear that today like I heard it when he used to say it. And I also hear the late Sir David, and both of them late, say, you know, *I'll let the record speak for itself*.

E. David Burt's record on behalf of this country will speak for itself. It's there. And if he didn't serve this country as a good Finance Minister and a person prepared to roll up his sleeve and make sure that we have [Southampton] Princess . . . we passed today, Mr. Speaker. We passed today a concession order. The opportunity to invest in this country is ripe. (Not "right"; "Ripe" with a "p.") Why? Because of good financial management of this country, of which I'm prepared to say I'm proud of.

And so, I take offence of what I heard being implied. And that's on me because that's how I'm affected.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

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

The Speaker: Good evening.

CARICOM MEMBERSHIP

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I know the hour is not officially late but late based on what we expected to be here, how long. But I wanted to briefly just circle back to National Heroes Day and the line and link that my colleague MP Famous and also Minister Furbert had shared previously.

And as we reflect on the consultative process and also reflect on Monday and what we are commemorating as National Heroes, we first honour and acknowledge that even through our naming of three National Heroes, that three of them have clear connections and historical ties to the region. And we saw it fitting even at that time to acknowledge not only their impact for Bermuda . . . we talk about Dr. E. F. Gordon having been born in Port of Spain, Trinidad, who was a notable voice of the workers and the unions in Bermuda, and impactful . . . and a shape-shifter in our context.

We think about also Mary Prince, whose journey took us to through her journey to Turks and Caicos and eventually settling in Antigua. And again, as individuals who we acknowledge and also have as part of our national hero and a national identity in Bermuda, the inexplicable links to the Caribbean and the region cannot be ignored.

We must acknowledge, even as I hear, even while we're in this Honourable House, the tremor of celebrations around us here in Bermuda. When we are celebrating Carnival during this weekend and its alignment to our cultural heritage and in celebration of those ties that we have saw fit to acknowledge and commemorate. There are persons in our context that ask about what is the benefit that they might see themselves more informed just by looking around us.

So, we see the economic and tourism opportunities that exist, even from association through deeper ties and deeper opportunities, like Minister Furbert spoke to. We can see further access for those who seek to be having opportunities for themselves that they currently are restricted from having access to. We talk about scholarships and opportunities for young persons.

Having recently participated in a radio interview, I reflect on a caller's contribution where she riddled all over the numerous islands that she had the benefit of working [in] and establishing an opportunity to live throughout the region. And when asked about the duty that the Government then has to create and facilitate those same opportunities for young Bermudians, it was then a, *Well, no, my circumstance was completely different*. As if a Bermudian in Bermuda, having returned from school would not be deemed eligible to take advantage of work opportunities

throughout the region. And there was something so bespoke that would not allow for a Bermudian to take advantage of these opportunities.

What it speaks to is a way of thinking. And you see it evident in the way in which certain persons would speak to the association with CARICOM, about the idea that it would be okay for some to go and work in the region but not allow for the facilitation of the same for others.

We see the opportunity that businesses have taken as individuals, individual corporations who have private interests. And we see that they have deemed it beneficial and are flocking there all in our faces, all while saying what is not good for us. And the question then becomes, and the responsibility as Government is to act on behalf of the people who cannot act for themselves. The question becomes, *Who is fighting for the people to be able to have access to those same opportunities?*

The cultural alignment and CARIFESTA is one. Yesterday, having seen a band perform and support Bermudians at CARIFESTA, and now here as part of our Carnival celebration supporting Bermudian talent, exposing them to a different style and a different standard that the region has and perpetuates. They have Soca Monarch and other things in their context, and you see the drive and the dedication of Bermudians trying to celebrate our cultural product and showcase our cultural product at that standard.

It is no secret that Trinidad is one of the highest standards of cultural, particularly around Carnival, representation and celebration. And you see the fruits of both that exposure and the fruits of that connectivity through our talent here in Bermuda.

And so, when we talk about *The Story of Us*, this is a story of giving nod to our history. But also recognising that the story of us is still being written and is still unfolding. And the story of us that says what we can collectively decide as a country that has already shown fruits of benefits of association can seek to benefit greater. It also tells us a story about what happens when we connect, what happens when we align ourselves, what happens when businesses see connectivity and can have greater benefit economically from that association.

The fear that seems to be aligned to greater cooperation is not understood, especially when we see countries like in the OECD and through the EU and the creation of even the CARICOM itself centred around fostering collaboration and ties and shared connectivity and shared trade and the opportunities that would be eligible to bring up a community that is not defined by geography, because many of the CARICOM full members are not in the Caribbean Sea. So not defined by geography, but defined by a mandate, defined by an anchor that says this is how we wish to evolve together.

And I invite people to tell me about an organisation, association, or a country that is perfect. Find me a country without crime. Find me an association that is without differing ideas. Find me an organisation that is perfectly suitable and does not offer . . . that offers a perfect experience. Because we are imperfect people and we operate in these

organisations, the organisations will have their flaws. But it doesn't remove its core purpose, it doesn't remove its core identity, and it doesn't remove our identity should we wish to have deeper association.

Nor does it redefine our identity through deeper association. And so, *The Story of Us* invites all of Bermuda to define what the next chapter will be, how we will seek to align ourselves. Will we wish to benefit but not also contribute? Will we seek to only be the respondents to world and shifting events? I think about what takes place when we see on the world stage countries who have defined who they no longer will do trade relations with, countries that have defined who they no longer will accept X, Y, and Z from. Are we looking for the opportunity for even the region that we already are connected to, to then determine who they will no longer connect with as well?

What happens to our CARIFESTA? What happens to CARIFTA? Where will we compete? Where will Bermuda wave its flag? Because in every other UN location, Bermuda's flag actually does not stand foot in these places. So where will we be? Is our identity really rooted in a sense of comfort that actually isn't factually represented? Where will we be if we don't have these opportunities that we enjoy, that we love, that we celebrate Bermudian talent being recognised and developed and pruned? I wonder.

The future that we wish to be written is up to us. Nothing has to be perfect. It requires a level of accountability. And the questions and the things that members of the public have engaged with the Ministry of Home Affairs throughout its consultation will be refined in the White Paper. It will be presented in the White Paper that we've pledged through the process that this House has defined at the outset. I thank Minister Furbert, and MP Famous for his support, having engaged with leaders across the region through his talk show. I thank even Colonel Burch having invited me to discuss the opportunities and the communities of St. George's and Somerset also for participating meaningfully.

It is up to us to define what is best for us. It is up to us to not respond to the shifting tides that we often have to do.

On Wednesday, I attended the Google subsea cable [landings], and I was reflective of a regional partner who has determined Bermuda to be, through Google's association, a place that it sees business. But what was most instructive is that in his remarks he talked about the parallel of the subsea cable to the Bermuda's beginnings as part of the slip [*sic*] route and the slip [*sic*] trade. The sloop trade, sorry. And it was most instructive that someone who is not organically a part of our context could identify the strength of our connectivity to the region as a partner during parallels to the technology and how it can also facilitate greater connectivity throughout the region. It talked about Bermuda as being part of what they see as greater regional integration and connectivity.

But, of course, we need someone else to tell us about who we are.

I thought it interesting that of all the things that he contributed in his remarks, having not been to Bermuda before, that he saw that in us. And so, it then invites us to see ourselves.

The consultation is closed, but I am thankful for the meaningful feedback that came. I'm even thankful for the critique because it only helps us to refine as a country and as a Government. As a people, we can choose our next steps. And I do look forward to the meaningful engagement in future conversations about this. I do invite people to still look at the commentary to best inform themselves, because I see commentary that is not informed by the truth. And I do charge every representative of people in this Honourable House to have the facts, because it no longer is the responsibility of the Government alone when there are 36 of us in this House that represent communities. And it becomes our added obligation to have the facts and at least give them that.

We get paid every month. And so at least we should be able to do that. Even if it is not the position, it is what the facts of what the document or what the Government has said, and said clearly. It is not up to me alone.

So, I do thank the other MPs and Members who have been a part of that community to sell and share the message of what is already a part of our history, already a part of what we deserve. And I do look forward to greater support in the future because this is what is best in Bermuda's interest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other . . . Opposition Leader.

Hon. Ben Smith: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening.

PLEADING FOR RESPONSIBLE SAFE CONDUCT OVER HOLIDAY WEEKEND

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, as we are heading into a holiday weekend, I am mindful that on several occasions I have given a similar speech, which is we are looking into a weekend that we are hoping that we are going to have positive, safe environment when the next time we sit on the 26th.

Unfortunately, the last time that I had to give, I gave this speech with this hope. When we returned, we had had some violence. We had had deaths on our roads.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that as a community we start to really take ownership of what we do as individuals. Everybody in our community has different things that they will do to celebrate over this weekend. Some people don't even know that we have heroes. Some people don't have any thought about what this weekend is supposed to represent. Many are just having fun.

But, Mr. Speaker, whatever is going to happen, it has to be done safely because the speeches reminding

people over and over again, trying to do whatever we can to change the behaviour seems to be falling on deaf ears.

It doesn't take very long from whatever direction any of us has to go tonight to see that the behaviour on the road does not change, regardless of what the police say, whatever committee we put in place, whether we educate people, whether we put it on the news, whether we put it on the back of a bus. It does not matter because our population does not seem to be paying attention to those words, to that information.

And once again, it does not matter whether we want to have a fun, safe weekend when there are people within our community that are right now trying to figure out how they can do damage. And it's our job here to try to put policies and laws in place.

But, Mr. Speaker, the truth is most of the time we're actually just being more punitive to the people that already follow rules.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: That's what we end up doing. If we have speed cameras and speed bumps and all those things that we think we're putting in place, the group that actually was already following the rules are the ones who are going to end up frustrated with all these changes while the behaviour of parts of our community doesn't change.

I was leaving swim practice at the National Sports Centre, and I watched a young man speed along that road and take both of those speed bumps at full throttle with not even . . . he wasn't thinking about anybody else. He was going from wherever he thought he was going to go. And the truth is, if something had happened to him, he wouldn't even know the suffering that he was leaving behind him.

And you're seeing the messages on social media where people are saying, *Listen, our young people are behaving so badly, they don't realise tomorrow's not promised.* And we have a community where our population is shrinking. We cannot afford to lose another young person.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are several things that have to be addressed in our community. And we know that there are real issues within our community, but we cannot change anything without personal responsibility. That has to be the number one change. People, individuals, have to start to take this on themselves and say, *I will change.* And it will start with a few individuals and then turn to neighbourhoods and then communities, and that is how we will take this over. But until that process begins, and it hasn't begun yet, how many times do we have to return to this House and give condolences for something that was preventable?

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everybody here and everybody in the listening public a safe and fun holiday weekend. One more time, not only personal responsibility, make sure that if you see somebody that is drinking too much, they are not getting in a vehicle. They won't be operating a vehicle.

If you see somebody that they're getting agitated, take the time, talk to them. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have mental health issues in our community where people are

trauma, they have trauma, and that trauma with alcohol and drugs turns into violence. We have this issue.

So, while you are having fun, make sure you're doing it responsibly and make sure if you see one of your friends, one of your relatives, pull them aside and say, *Enough is enough, and maybe you should take a little time out*. Be responsible over this weekend so that everybody can have fun, and on the other side of this weekend, everybody will be safe.

So, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and happy holiday weekend to everybody.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right, Mr. Speaker.

Can I get a clock, please, of 20 minutes?

The Speaker: Oh, so you needed that?

[Laughter]

PLP GOVERNMENT NOT SPENDING ENERGY LOOKING BACKWARDS

Hon. E. David Burt: We shall see.

Well, Mr. Speaker, certainly you would know that I am incredibly anxious to get out of this House, not for any reason other than there are 14 persons who have flown into the country to visit me this weekend for a Carnival weekend, and some of them have flown halfway around the world. So, I certainly want to make sure that I go and see them.

However, Mr. Speaker, as we have heard, the Honourable Member from constituency 25, the Shadow Minister of Finance, has returned to the same matter that he did the last session, Mr. Speaker. And last week, two weeks ago, I was tired, very tired, having dealt with things.

But this week, I am not going to let it go, no matter if my friends have to wait for me for another half an hour. And I know that my friends and family are actually out right now enjoying local music at an event full of local Bermudian artists.

But now, Mr. Speaker, let me be clear on this particular matter, so that people of the country can understand. We have an Act of Parliament. The current report was tabled two weeks ago, I do believe. The reports for the two years prior were tabled. And as it related to some older reports, I have been clear with the Honourable Member in writing that I gave no commitment to reconstruct historical reports from years ago, because the public service resources required to do that are, in my view, better used advancing the work that Bermudians elected this Government to deliver.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is misleading the House.

The Speaker: How is the Premier—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He has no discretion as to whether these reports are supplied or not.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: Oh, Lord.

The Speaker: Okay. Let him make his presentation.

Hon. E. David Burt: See, here's the problem, Mr. Speaker.

This Honourable Member will stand up, pontificate for as much as he wants,—

An Hon. Member: —Give his opinion.—

Hon. E. David Burt: —and will not even—give his opinion and will not listen to the response.

And I'm grateful, Mr. Speaker, that you stopped him, because he does this all the time.

An Hon. Member: Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa.

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, I will continue, Mr. Speaker.

I gave no commitment to reconstruct historical reports from many years ago, because the public service resources required to do that are, in my view, better used in advancing the work Bermudians elected this Government to deliver. That is not hidden. That is not secret. That is not something that has been uncovered. I told the Honourable Member that plainly in written communication.

He is entitled to disagree, which clearly, he has. He's entitled to say that in his view, public officers should be directed away from current priorities to reconstruct old administrative reports. That is his position, and he's fine to hold it.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Premier is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker. That's not what I said.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay. He expressed if that's your opinion, you say it in an opinion form.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He can have that view, Mr. Speaker. That is fine for him to hold. But I do not accept his attempt to turn this disagreement into some grand personal allegation against me, another speech about record, leadership, or what I see is a complete and, I would say, repeated fixation.

But allow me to say this, Mr. Speaker. This Government has a responsibility to govern. That means that we will set our priorities, we will use limited public resources wisely, and we will focus the public service on the work that affects the lives of Bermudians now.

And what is that work, Mr. Speaker? That work is expanding health care for seniors and working families, which we have done. It is expanding prescription drug coverage under FutureCare and introducing it under HIP, which we have done. It is delivering annual health exams for HIP and FutureCare policyholders without co-pays, which we have done. It is advancing universal health care and building the core benefits package to be delivered later this year, which we are doing.

It is increasing pensions for seniors every year since taking office and now bringing legislation to provide an increase to public sector retirees whose pensions have been frozen since 2014.

It is about making record investments in affordable housing, continued delivery on affordable housing. It is expanding Bermuda Housing Corporation stock, renovating units, advancing new residential development, and investing over \$100 million to put more Bermudian families under secure roofs.

It's about the work of which we did in the Mortgage Guarantee Programme, reducing down payments from 20 per cent to 10 per cent, lowering interest rates, raising the stamp duty exemption, and making sure that multiple dozens of Bermudians were able to own their home.

It is about reducing payroll taxes to workers for the lowest level in history when that government, or sorry, that Opposition, made them the highest level in history.

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: It is about making sure that we deliver this country's first statutory minimum wage.

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. E. David Burt: It is about introducing paternity leave in this country and expanding maternity leave. It is about reducing . . . doing our best to tackle the cost-of-living crisis, which is a global matter, by eliminating duty on essential items and freezing fuel prices not once but twice during periods of global instability.

That is what we are focused on, Mr. Speaker. We are continuing to be focused.

I went to the Bermuda College graduation a couple of weeks ago.

An Hon. Member: Say it.

Hon. E. David Burt: And the president of Bermuda College stood up and asked the persons there who were attending the Bermuda College on a College Promise scholarship or financial assistance. And half of that room stood up, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Wow!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: And it is that Opposition, Mr. Speaker—

An Hon. Member: They cut it!

Hon. E. David Burt: —that when we introduced free Bermuda College said, *No, find your money to pay for it.*

An Hon. Member: No way.

Hon. E. David Burt: That is what they did, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's right. That's what they did.

Hon. E. David Burt: And they're talking about a report?

Well, you know what we're talking about, Mr. Speaker? We are talking about the young people who have opportunities because this Government has a different vision, Mr. Speaker. And the Honourable Member can get up and pontificate every week. But we will not be deterred in delivering our election manifesto, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: No, we will not.

Hon. E. David Burt: We will not be deterred in delivering our election manifesto.

We have a group of committed Ministers. We have a group of committed Backbenchers who are committed to following through on the promises and pledges that we made to this electorate. And yes, it is about diversifying our economy through digital finance, making sure that we continue to build international business and certainly turning to a technology future.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Two days ago, the Honourable Member was there—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Come on.

Hon. E. David Burt: —with Google.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: I can assure you Google isn't worried about four years' old administrative reports, Mr. Speaker.

They're worried about the investment that they're going to deliver in the communities inside of this country, Mr. Speaker. That is what we are focused on, Mr. Speaker.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that is the contrast. He can spend his time talking about reports from four years ago. But this Government, Mr. Speaker, is focused on expanding health care access, delivering affordable housing, making a more secure future for our seniors, continuing to invest

resources into public education, tax relief for our persons, our workers and our businesses, cost of living relief, jobs and economic growth which we are continuing to deliver.

And so, he can come back to it every week, Mr. Speaker, but trust and believe I will get up every single week for the rest of the time that I am the Premier of this country and remind—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: And remind this country of the record, the difference and the change.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Because nine years ago, students could not go to Bermuda College for free.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: Nine years ago, seniors could not get a health exam without a copay. There are many things that are different now than they were nine years ago. And let's be clear, there will be more that we will deliver over the next four and a half months, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Increase in pensions!

Hon. E. David Burt: There will be more that we will deliver over the next four and a half months.

And so, I stand by this. The limited resources of the public service should be focused on delivering for the people of Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, we inherited, let's not forget, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right. Remind them.

Hon. E. David Burt: —inherited massive deficits. Inherited significant debt.

An Hon. Member: Inherited?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We inherited a failed Morgan Point project that cost taxpayers over \$200 million. But guess what we did, Mr. Speaker? We turned it all around. Managed a once-in-a-century pandemic. Managed the 40-year-high global inflation, and through all of it all, this Government kept on delivering.

So, here's what I'll say, Mr. Speaker. We are not going to spend our energy as a Government looking backwards.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: The people are asking us to deliver on our election manifesto, and this Cabinet, supported by this Backbench, is doing just that. That is what we've done, Mr. Speaker. That is what we will continue to do.

NATIONAL HEROES DAY

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, let me turn to the issue at hand, Mr. Speaker. National Heroes Day. As stated by the Honourable Member, the Leader of the Opposition, it is a weekend, and it is tradition that when the House of Assembly closes on Friday in advance of the long holiday weekend on our last sitting, we wish members of the community well.

I think it is fitting to note, Mr. Speaker, that the hotels of this Island are completely full.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Uh-oh.

Hon. E. David Burt: The planes coming in are completely full. The work of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, the work of the Bermuda Tourism Authority, the work of our partners, the work of the newly formed Entertainment Committee, making sure that we continue to promote and have events that attract people to this country should be applauded.

But the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that we must make sure that we enjoy this weekend responsibly. And so, I echo the comments of the Opposition Leader, which are no different than the comments that were made from the Minister of Health, who spoke about, you know, making sure that we keep our hygiene in a Carnival situation,—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —from the Minister of National Security urging safety, and certainly from the Minister of Transport making sure that we have safe road use.

And so, I would encourage everyone, as we enjoy this weekend, as I will state the statement which was issued from myself as the Leader of the Government earlier today. Because though there is a celebration, it is reminding that it is a celebration of our National Heroes. And at that point in time that we celebrate our National Heroes, there are many in this country who are mourning the death of a National Hero. And I know that the Ministry of Culture is going to make sure that that particular matter is formally part of the festivities which will take place on National Heroes Day on Monday.

But I think that it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we remember and recollect. And I think the Honourable Member would be good to take heed of the comments that the late John Swan had left in his open letter to the public.

So, in that case, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask that we remember that there's far more that we agree on than we disagree on. And I hope that we will come together and

celebrate National Heroes Day in a way fitting of this country.

To you, Mr. Speaker, have a wonderful weekend and I'll see you at our special sitting.

[Desk thumping]

**SPECIAL JOINT PARLIAMENTARY SESSION TO
HONOUR SIR JOHN SWAN, KBE, JP**

The Speaker: Members, with the day now coming to a close, I am going to make a few remarks just basically where you ended, Premier, in reference to when we come together for that special sitting.

Much has been said already this evening of what we traditionally say about this time, how we want everybody to remain safe, particularly on our roadways and byways, and that people ride and drive cautiously without alcohol and other things in their system. Much has been said so I won't do that traditional piece.

But we are in a mode where we're celebrating our heroes but also mourning the loss of a National Hero. And this House will sit on a special sitting before we come back to Parliament for parliament business. So just be mindful that once the arrangements are all confirmed the date will be conferred to all Members here.

But I want you to also understand that to be truly fitting to the recognition that the former Sir John deserves in his former roles that he's played in this country, we're going to have a special sitting not just for the joint Houses but it will be a special sitting of the CPA branch, which means any Member who served in Parliament or the Senate is a member of the CPA for life. So those former Members who have sat here before, who sat under the time of Sir John, will be able to join us in the Chamber to give remarks as well to make it all fitting.

So, when the final details are confirmed, it will be publicly shared amongst us all as to the date that we'll come back and celebrate that. Okay?

So, with that said, enjoy the holiday. Remember what it is, recognising heroes. And we all can be heroes by saving a life, encouraging others not to drink and drive and others to be respectful for one another.

With that, enjoy the holiday.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: And the House now stands adjourned.

[At 7:19 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 26 June 2026.]

[This page intentionally left blank.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
26 JUNE 2026
10:04 AM**

Sitting Number 38 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

Premier.

The Speaker: [Good] morning, Members.
The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

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

PRAYERS

The Speaker: Good morning.

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

Hon. E. David Burt: I am certain you approve of my clothing choices and attire in this wonderful season.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

The Speaker: Yes.

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

**CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF
CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS) ORDER 2026**

[Gavel]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Contributory Pensions \(Amendment of Contributions and Benefits\) Order 2026](#), proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise the power conferred by section 37 of the Contributory Pensions Act 1970.

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

Shall I go on, Mr. Speaker?

[Pause]

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Speaker: Yes.

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes of the last sitting on the 12th of June have been deferred.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

**BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY (BMA)
2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

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

APOLOGIES

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Bermuda Monetary Authority 2025 Annual Report](#). This report is submitted in accordance with section 28(2) of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969.

The Speaker: I have been informed that Minister Weeks will be absent today.
That's the only announcement this morning.

The Speaker: Yes, thank you.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The next this morning is in the name of the Minister of Cabinet Office.
Minister.

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

**PRIVACY COMMISSIONER—SAFEGUARDING
BERMUDA ANNUAL REPORT 2025/26**

The Speaker: We have five such papers this morning. The first is in the name of the Minister of Finance and Premier.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Privacy Commissioner—Safeguarding Bermuda Annual Report](#)

2025/26, as required by section 37 of the Personal Information Protection Act 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next is in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

BERMUDA'S EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR RELATIONS TRIBUNAL REPORT, STRENGTHENING THE ENFORCEMENT POWERS

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly [Strengthening the Enforcement Powers of Bermuda's Employment and Labour Relations Tribunal Report](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

And the final paper this morning is in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Minister.

CHILD DAY CARE ALLOWANCE AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the [Child Day Care Allowance Amendment Regulations 2026](#), as made by the Minister responsible for Financial Assistance in exercise of the power conferred by section 17 of the Child Day Care Allowance Act 2008.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That brings us to the conclusion of Papers and Other Communications. We will now move on.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.
We will now move on.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have, I believe it is six, Statements this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Premier.

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY (BMA) 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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

Mr. Speaker, in accordance with section 28 of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969, earlier today I tabled in this Honourable House the [2025 Annual Report of the Bermuda Monetary Authority](#), which I will hereinafter refer to as "the Report."

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's financial services sector is subject to the regulation and supervision of the Bermuda Monetary Authority. And the Authority operates pursuant to the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969, which provides it with a number of principal objects, including the supervision, regulation and inspection of financial institutions operating in or from within Bermuda, together with the promotion of financial stability and soundness of financial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members would be aware that the Authority has specific licensing and supervisory responsibilities under the following regulatory statutes: the Banks and Deposit Companies Act; Corporate Service Provider Business Act; the Digital Asset Business Act; the Insurance Act; the Investment Business Act; the Investment Funds Act; Money Service Business Act; the Fund Administration Provider Business Act; the Trusts (Regulation of Trust Business) Act, together with other statutes. The Authority also regulates the Bermuda Stock Exchange.

The Authority's mission is to contribute to Bermuda's financial stability, protect customers of financial services and protect Bermuda's currency through maintaining effective and proactive regulatory frameworks through its highly skilled and engaged workforce; delivering efficient operations and sustainable business practices; and supporting responsible innovation locally and in global markets.

International Recognition

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Authority has received international recognition for its regulatory excellence, Bermuda being one of only seven jurisdictions with United States National Association of Insurance Commissioners [NAIC] "qualified jurisdiction" status, one of three with NAIC "reciprocal jurisdiction" status, and just one of two jurisdictions in the world to be granted full Solvency II equivalence by the European Union.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority is an active and respected participant in key international regulatory bodies, fostering strong global relationships. The Authority's Managing Director (Supervision) serves on the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS) Executive Committee, with BMA staff leading or contributing to numerous IAIS committees, including those on monitoring and risk assessment, the Signatories Working Group and the Financial Crime Forum. The Authority also engages with the Financial Stability Board, the Bank for International Settlements, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Develop-

ment's Working Party on Insurance and Pensions, and the Global Financial Innovation Network.

Legislation

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Authority is authorised to advise the Minister of Finance on policy matters relating to financial institutions and may propose legislation consistent with its responsibilities under the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969. Amongst the legislative proposals advanced in 2025 were measures to enhance the oversight and regulation of insurance groups, including expanded criteria for group supervision and a regime for designated insurance holding companies; measures to bolster the Authority's power to make rules in relation to statutory financial statements; and measures to enable information sharing with the Bermuda Deposit Insurance Corporation to support the efficient and effective management of any banking crisis which might arise.

Additionally, rules were made establishing requirements in respect of custody of client assets for digital asset businesses, enhancements were made to existing rules for insurers in relation to solvency requirements, and regulations governing the charging by banks of over-the-limit and unauthorised overdraft fees were also passed.

Financial Sector Highlights

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Members' attention is drawn to the following key highlights for the various sectors supervised by the Authority:

Banking Sector

Hon. E. David Burt: With regard to the banking sector, consolidated assets increased to \$26.1 billion in 2025, up from \$23.7 billion in 2024. Investments retained the largest share of total assets at 51.0 per cent, followed by loans at 31.8 per cent, and cash and deposits at 14.6 per cent. Net interest income continued to be the largest component of the banking sector's income at \$756.8 million, up from \$754.5 million in 2024.

Insurance Sector

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, moving to the insurance sector, 1,210 insurers were registered as of 31 [December] 2025, compared to 1,239 in 2024, with 56 insurers added to the register in 2025.

According to 2024 year-end information, total capital and surplus was \$447 billion in 2024, an increase from the \$404 billion recorded in 2023. Gross premiums written were \$362 billion in 2024, an increase of \$46 billion from the \$316 billion recorded in 2023. This increase is attributed to the growth in business written by large, commercial, general business and long-term insurers. Total assets were \$2.17 trillion

in 2024, an increase of \$296 billion from the \$1.87 trillion recorded in 2023. This increase was largely due to increased [business] written by a specific group of insurers.

Investment Sector

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, moving to the investment sector, there were 54 licensed investment business providers, an increase of two from 52 in 2024; and 60 registered investment business providers operating in Bermuda during 2025. The aggregate total assets under management reported by licensed investment providers were \$300.2 billion compared to \$230.5 billion in 2024. Total assets under administration for 2025 were \$30.7 billion, compared to \$25.4 billion reported for 2024.

Mr. Speaker, in 2025, there were 766 investment funds on the Investment Funds Act register, a decrease of 18 compared to 784 in 2024. Of these funds, 130 were overseas funds being promoted in Bermuda and 636 were Bermuda funds. This is contrasted against 2024, whereby 129 overseas funds were promoted in Bermuda, and Bermuda funds totalled 655, with a net asset value reported in relation to Bermuda funds of \$315.38 billion, an increase from \$294.8 billion in 2024. At the end of 2025, Mr. Speaker, 21 fund administrator licences were in issue, with \$199.5 billion in assets under management.

Digital Asset Business Sector

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, 2025 was another year of growth for the digital asset business sector, which ended the year with 49 digital asset [business] providers operating in Bermuda, an increase from the 36 recorded in 2024. This sector is continuing to demonstrate strong growth, which is a testament to this Government's foresight in ensuring that Bermuda established a credible regime for this emerging sector, which has been in place since 2018.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have to acknowledge in the Chamber the Director of FinTech at the Bermuda Monetary Authority, Mr. Moad Fahmi, who has been with us since the very beginning of this and is responsible for the significant innovation of which we have seen in this particular sector.

Mr. Speaker, the total equity market capitalisation of the Bermuda Stock Exchange stood at \$297.0 billion at the end of 2025 as compared with [\$217.6] billion at the end of 2024. A total of 209 new insurance-linked securities were added to the BSX in 2025, an increase from 156 new issues recorded in 2024. Domestic trading volume totalled just over 834,000 shares in 2025, down from 11.3 million in 2024, and the value of shares traded decreased to \$11.6 million compared to \$105.8 million in 2024, primarily due to merger activity.

BMA 2025 Financial Highlights

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I draw to the attention of Honourable Members the following highlights set out in the Statement of Accounts Report:

- Net income for the Authority was \$18.55 million, up from net income of \$17.93 million in the previous year.
- Total revenue increased by 16.1 per cent to \$150.7 million, up from \$129.8 million. This increase is mainly due to a \$24.47 million increase in revenue from supervisory and licensing fees.
- Expenses increased by 18.13 per cent to \$132.15 million. The increase was mainly due to the \$15.1 million in increased salaries and benefits.
- Licensing fees were \$139 million, compared to \$114.5 million from the prior year, of which \$126.3 million was paid by the insurance sector.
- The receipt of funds from fines and penalties decreased by \$4 million from the previous year.
- The Authority had 343 full-time employees, an increase from 302 in 2024.
- Board Members are paid an annual fee of \$50,000, unchanged from 2024. Board Sub Committee Chairs are paid an annual fee of \$58,000 to \$63,000, unchanged from 2024. The Chairman of the Board receives an annual fee of \$125,000, unchanged from 2024.
- The CEO's salary, Mr. Speaker, is set at \$564,000, up from \$550,000 in 2024, and the CEO is eligible for a performance-based bonus of up to 50 per cent of base salary. The salaries for the other 20 members of the executive team range from \$286,000 to \$513,000, with a performance-based bonus of up to 42 per cent of salary.

Mr. Speaker, upon reviewing the Authority's 2025 financial statements, the Auditor General has issued a clean audit opinion.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government, I wish to express sincere appreciation to the Authority's Board. I also wish to extend special thanks to the executive team and dedicated staff of the Bermuda Monetary Authority. The Board and executive team deserve Honourable Members' congratulations for their sound stewardship and the excellent financial results achieved in 2025. As Minister of Finance, I am especially grateful for the continued partnership and collaboration with the Authority's leadership, as this Government remains focused on expanding and strengthening Bermuda's financial services sector in a globally competitive environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

The Speaker: All right, I didn't have the microphone on. Sorry about that.

Thank you, Mr. Premier.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Before I acknowledge the next Statement this morning, I would just like to acknowledge that in our Gallery, in our "visitor's box" here, we have former Clerk, Mrs. [Shernette] Wolffe, sitting in with us this morning.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: It's nice to see her with us today. I don't know if she has the stomach for a full sitting this morning, but she's welcome to stay as long as she likes.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: We'll keep you guessing and see how long you can last today. How's that? It's a short Order Paper, but you are welcome.

Mrs. Shernette Wolffe: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Minister De Silva.

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

Mr. Speaker, I think we should talk to Mrs. Wolffe and see if she can maybe sit over in this chair for the rest of the day.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Are you giving Mr. Somner the day off today?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, take the day off, Mr. Somner.

The Speaker: Okay, all right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: My old schoolmate.

The Speaker: Okay.

BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—
FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the public with an

important [update](#) on the execution of the Government's Affordable Housing Programme.

Members of this Honourable House will recall my Statement, delivered just a few weeks ago on May 29th, wherein I outlined our comprehensive, multi-site plan to inject an estimated \$114,750,000 into delivering a total of 229 residential units across the Island. Today, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report on the formal execution of the first major component of that plan. I can confirm for the record of this House that the critical bank financing required to propel the first phase of these essential community projects forward has officially reached its financial close.

Mr. Speaker, securing a financial and commercial package of this complexity requires a highly coordinated, multi-agency effort. I want to express my appreciation to the management and staff across the key institutions involved: the Bermuda Commercial Bank, the Bermuda Land Management Corporation (BLMC), the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General's Chambers, and the Bermuda Housing Corporation (BHC). Their hard work, experience and the financial due diligence they showed was nothing short of amazing. It has been, and I'm sure will continue to be, Mr. Speaker, not only what I consider to be a privilege but also a very humbling and rewarding experience to watch these professionals at work.

Furthermore, an achievement of this nature demands absolute legal and fiscal precision. I want to recognise the sterling efforts of the team at the Attorney-General's Chambers for their indispensable and astute legal oversight. Their meticulous verification of the legal frameworks, specifically regarding the execution of the Government's interim guarantee under the Government Loans Act 1978, ensured that this entire transaction stands on a secure, transparent, and watertight foundation. Coupled with the fiscal scrutiny of the Ministry of Finance, we have established the rock-solid administrative platform necessary for immediate project execution.

Mr. Speaker, to put this specific milestone in context within the broader \$114.75 million programme previously detailed to the House, this closed facility represents a \$64 million component. This capital is strictly ring-fenced to fund the immediate construction of 84 new residential units distributed across three of our designated development sites: Tommy Fox Road (in St. David's), Albert Row and Victoria Place (in Dockyard).

With site construction projected to commence this coming August, the Ministry has prioritised a project delivery model that balances aggressive timelines with structural excellence. To achieve our targeted 18-month completion schedule, this project will utilise advanced precast concrete construction. Following a rigorous technical and procurement evaluation conducted by our Affordable Housing Advisory Committee, Coastal Precast Systems (CPS) have been engaged to

supply the specialised structural components for these specific developments.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to provide this Honourable House with the necessary technical context and historical precedent regarding this partner and methodology. Precast concrete is not a novel or untested experiment in Bermuda. Rather, it is a proven, highly successful building system with a clear local track record. This is the exact building system previously deployed by the West End Development Corporation, now part of the unified BLMC, to successfully replace the dilapidated historical structures at Victoria Row in Dockyard.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that this project in Dockyard to which I speak was started under the PLP. When the OBA took office in 2012, they stopped the work. By doing so, they curtailed a plan that would have provided 100 homes, leaving us with only 20.

By utilising Coastal Precast Systems, the project benefits from elite, off-site manufacturing processes. Structural components are cast and cured in highly controlled factory environments, ensuring optimal concrete density, structural integrity, and exceptional resistance to Bermuda's high-salinity and hurricane-prone climate.

Mr. Speaker, I want to explicitly clarify the operational dynamics of this project to dispel any lingering misconceptions. While the core structural engineering takes place off-site to ensure speed and durability, the deployment of this methodology serves as a direct catalyst for our domestic economy.

Bermudian contractors, tradespeople, and service providers will be the backbone of the physical execution of this programme on Island. Local firms will be heavily engaged to manage and execute all site preparation, foundation pouring, civil engineering works, utility infrastructure routing, and the comprehensive interior fitouts of all 84 homes. This hybrid approach pairs international manufacturing efficiency with a robust commitment to local employment, keeping Bermuda's construction sector active, vibrant and invested in the Island's future.

Mr. Speaker, this PLP Government remains firmly focused on tangible outcomes and transparent governance. By formalising this financing and partnering with proven industry experts, we are transitioning from planning to active execution, advancing our promise to deliver sustainable, resilient, and affordable homes for the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's housing crisis will not be solved by armchair outrage or opinion pieces every other week, especially by the Shadow Minister. It will be solved by decisions, delivery and hard work—things this Government is doing. This Government, Mr. Speaker, is focused on one thing, and that is getting Bermudians housed as quickly as we can. And let me be clear. No amount of noise from that side of this House will stop that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

**BERMUDA'S EMPLOYMENT
AND LABOUR RELATIONS TRIBUNAL,
STRENGTHENING ENFORCEMENT POWERS**

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to lay for the information of this Honourable House the [policy paper entitled "Strengthening the Enforcement Powers of Bermuda's Employment Tribunal."](#)

The Employment and Labour Relations Tribunal is a cornerstone of Bermuda's labour relations framework.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, Members. We are trying to hear your Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: It provides employees and employers with an accessible forum to resolve workplace disputes fairly, efficiently, and in accordance with the law. For many Bermudians, the Tribunal represents the most practical avenue through which workplace grievances can be heard and justice can be achieved. However, Mr. Speaker, while the Tribunal has served Bermuda well, experience over recent years has demonstrated that aspects of the current legislative framework require modernisation.

Concerns identified by the Tribunal itself include delays in proceedings, procedural gaps that place employees at a disadvantage, challenges associated with statutory decision-making timelines, and, most significantly, instances where there is a lack of compliance with Tribunal orders. When an employee successfully pursues a claim before the Tribunal and receives an award, that award must mean something. Justice delayed is difficult enough. Justice denied through non-compliance is entirely unacceptable. The Government is therefore committed to ensuring that Tribunal decisions are not merely advisory in nature but are respected, enforceable, and capable of delivering real outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, the policy proposals contained within this document are practical, balanced and informed by stakeholder engagement, the Tribunal's own experience, and international best practice. They seek to strengthen confidence in Bermuda's employment justice system while maintaining fairness for responsible employers.

Mr. Speaker, the first proposal addresses disciplinary actions undertaken during employee rest periods and leave. While existing legislation restricts the issuance of termination notices during [certain] periods of leave, there remains a legislative gap regarding disciplinary warnings and related actions. The proposed reform would generally prohibit disciplinary measures from being issued during weekends, rest days, after working hours, or while an employee is on vacation or

other approved leave, except in limited circumstances involving documented and time-sensitive risks.

This reform will provide employees with greater protection from undue pressure while ensuring that employers retain the ability to address serious misconduct where necessary. It promotes fairness, reduces workplace conflict, and reinforces proper procedural standards.

Mr. Speaker, the second proposal seeks to strengthen the Tribunal's authority to manage its hearing schedule effectively. In recent years, cases have been delayed by repeated scheduling disputes, late requests for adjournments, and procedural tactics that have prolonged hearings for months and, in some instances, more than a year. The proposed changes will establish clearer rules regarding hearing date variations, impose firm deadlines for scheduling requests, and create a presumption that hearings may proceed where reasonable dates have been repeatedly refused without valid cause. These measures will reduce unnecessary delays, improve efficiency, and ensure that both employees and employers receive timely resolutions to their disputes.

Mr. Speaker, the third proposal addresses decision-making timelines. Currently, Tribunal decisions are required to be issued within 30 calendar days. While well-intentioned, this requirement has proven challenging in practice. The proposal would replace the current standard with a 30 business-day timeframe, providing Tribunal members with a more realistic period to prepare comprehensive and well-reasoned decisions. Importantly, this change is not about slowing down justice. Rather, it is about ensuring that decisions are accurate, thorough, and capable of withstanding scrutiny while maintaining strong performance expectations.

Mr. Speaker, the most significant reform contained within this policy paper relates to enforcement. At present, when employers fail to comply with Tribunal awards, employees are often forced to pursue further legal action through the courts. This process can be expensive, time-consuming, and discouraging, particularly for employees who have already succeeded in proving their case.

The Government is proposing a clear and graduated enforcement framework that introduces meaningful consequences for non-compliance. Under the proposed system, an employer's first failure to comply would result in a formal notice and an opportunity to rectify the breach. Continued non-compliance would result in civil penalties of \$15,000 per affected employee in addition to the original award. Persistent offenders would be publicly identified through a Compliance Watch List and could be subject to broader public notices issued by the Government.

These measures are designed to strike an appropriate balance between fairness and accountability. Employers will be afforded reasonable opportunities to

comply, but persistent disregard for Tribunal decisions will carry both financial and reputational consequences.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of these reforms are significant. They will strengthen confidence in Bermuda's labour relations system by ensuring that Tribunal decisions lead to meaningful outcomes. They will improve access to justice by reducing the need for employees to pursue costly enforcement actions through the courts. They will encourage greater compliance with employment law and create a more predictable and transparent framework for employers and employees alike.

Ultimately, these proposals represent a targeted modernisation of Bermuda's employment justice system. They reinforce the principle that Tribunal decisions must not simply exist on paper, they must be respected, enforced, and capable of delivering real remedies for those entitled to them.

Mr. Speaker, a fair and effective labour relations system is essential to a modern economy. By strengthening the powers of the Employment and Labour Relations Tribunal, we are strengthening confidence in our institutions, supporting fair workplaces, and ensuring that Bermuda's employment framework continues to serve both employees and employers effectively.

The [policy paper](#), "Strengthening the Enforcement Powers of Bermuda's Employment Tribunal," sets out these improvements clearly, and I lay it for the information of this Honourable House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement this morning is the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Minister.

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER OUT OF SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update on the work being advanced by The Office of Youth Affairs (TOYA) to [strengthen support for children with autism spectrum disorder](#) (ASD) and other neurodivergent needs within the Out of School programme.

This work reflects the Ministry's commitment to inclusive youth development. As more children with neurodivergent needs participate in after-school, mid-term, holiday, and summer programmes, our responsibility is clear. Recreational spaces must be welcoming, structured, safe, inclusive, and properly supported.

Mr. Speaker, the ASD initiative has developed through observation, parent engagement, staff reflection, and programme experience. It was not designed as a single event. It has grown through several pro-

gramme periods, including the October 2025 mid-term session, the December 2025 holiday session, the February 2026 mid-term session, and the April 2026 programme period. Each session helped staff understand what children need in real recreational settings. Staff observed the value of predictable routines, clear transitions, calm spaces, visual supports, sensory activities, and carefully planned group interaction.

Progress also looked different for each child. For one child, progress may mean joining a game with a peer. For another, it may mean asking for a break before becoming overwhelmed, moving through a transition with less distress, communicating a need, or building confidence through play.

Mr. Speaker, that learning has informed the development of an ASD curriculum framework for the Out of School programme. At the centre of this framework is a recreation social skills model, supported by Individual Recreation Plans for participating children. These plans will be informed by registration questionnaire calls with parents and guardians, staff observations, previous programme notes, known strengths, identified triggers, and strategies that have already helped children succeed.

The mission is to provide a structured, high-energy, and inclusive recreational environment where neurodivergent children can build social communication, emotional regulation, independence, and confidence through play. This is recreation with purpose. It helps children practice real-world life skills in a safe and supportive setting.

Mr. Speaker, the August 2026 Summer Session will be the first dedicated summer session shaped by this ASD framework. It will bring lessons from previous Out of School programme sessions into a more coordinated summer model, using structured recreation, predictable routines, and staff-supported engagement to help children learn, interact, and grow. We currently have 12 confirmed registrations and room for more for this August session.

The curriculum will focus on practical areas of development. Social communication and peer interaction will be supported through cooperative games, buddy activities, structured group challenges, visual communication aids, and low-pressure opportunities for connection. Emotional regulation and self-advocacy will be supported through check-in stations, calm spaces, sensory supports, and simple ways for children to signal when they need a break.

Executive functioning and daily routines will be strengthened through visual schedules, responsibility rotations, transition countdowns, and consistent daily patterns. Personal care and independence will also be woven into the day through routines such as packing belongings, drinking water, using sun protection, cleaning up, and sorting personal items.

Mr. Speaker, inclusion must be intentional. Neurodivergent children should have access to meaningful recreational opportunities, while also receiving

the support they need to participate safely and confidently. Where appropriate, and where it supports the child's Individual Recreation Plan, there will be planned opportunities for interaction with the wider Out of School programme population. These activities will be guided by staff and shaped around each child's readiness, strengths, and support needs.

Mr. Speaker, preparation for the August session includes staff training, practical coaching, and clear expectations across the programme. Staff must be ready before children arrive. The Office of Youth Affairs is placing strong emphasis on mandatory preparatory training, online learning, and direct coaching.

The training pathway will include autism-informed practice, routine-based social communication, social narratives, positive reinforcement, and structured work systems. Staff will also receive practical coaching from the programme coordinator, including modelling calm transitions, using sensory spaces appropriately, and supporting self-advocacy without escalating distress. Training will continue throughout the programme through observation, reporting, and guidance. This supports consistency for children, confidence for staff, and trust with parents and guardians.

Mr. Speaker, leadership and coordination will be central to the success of this work. The Youth Programme Senior Supervisor will oversee implementation, standards, parent relationships, and programme growth. The Programme Coordinator will operate directly in the field, supporting activity planning, specialised supplies, parent intake, site observations, and the practical delivery of each child's Individual Recreation Plan. This structure supports the initiative at both the planning level and the programme delivery level.

Mr. Speaker, this is a significant step for the Out of School programme. It builds on the commitment of staff who have worked session after session to understand the children and families they serve. It also reflects a wider commitment to prepare environments that help children participate with dignity, safety, inclusion, and joy.

The August 2026 Summer Session will be an important milestone. Learning from this session will help inform future after-school, mid-term, holiday, and summer programming. It will also strengthen how we plan, train, communicate with parents, and support each child's experience.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the staff of TOYA and the Out of School programme for their commitment to this work. I also thank the parents and guardians who continue to share information, ask questions, and work with us as partners. Most importantly, I acknowledge the children whose personalities, strengths, needs, and progress continue to guide this work.

Through this ASD initiative, TOYA is taking practical steps to ensure that more children can experience recreation, friendship, independence, and belonging.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, colleagues, and indeed, the listening public.

NATIONAL PARKS, SUMMER REMINDER ON RESPONSIBLE USE

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, as Bermudians prepare to enjoy another [summer in our beautiful parks and beaches](#), this Government has been hard at work ensuring these public spaces are ready for families, residents and visitors alike. Across the Island, the Department of Parks has been carrying out improvements, repairs and routine maintenance to ensure that our national parks remain safe, welcoming and accessible.

Among the recent works completed are repairs to the railings at the steps at Mullet Bay Park and the Blue Hole Park viewing area. Additional improvements, including repairs to the Horseshoe Bay boardwalks, fencing at Somerset Long Bay and new road markings within the Botanical Gardens, will continue over the coming weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to advise this Honourable House that our beach cleaner and mechanical beach rake are fully operational and are once again helping to maintain some of Bermuda's most heavily used public beaches. Scheduled beach cleaning is now carried out each weekend at Somerset Long Bay, Horseshoe Bay, Clearwater Beach, Shelly Bay and John Smith's Bay, while the equipment is also deployed on an ad hoc basis whenever conditions require additional attention. These efforts help ensure that our beaches remain clean, safe and welcoming throughout the busy summer season.

At the Botanical Gardens restoration work to the Cacti and Succulent House continues to progress on schedule. With only the remaining electrical works outstanding, we anticipate the project will be completed no later than September, allowing this important facility to once again be fully enjoyed by the public.

Mr. Speaker, I am also pleased to share that the Ministry is in the final stages of an agreement that will deliver new playground equipment to several public playgrounds across Bermuda including Ducks Puddle Park, where families within the area have gone without playground equipment for almost nine years. This investment reflects our commitment to creating safe, modern and enjoyable recreational spaces for Bermuda's children and families.

Mr. Speaker, these projects represent just some of the work being undertaken by this Government to improve our public spaces. However, maintaining these investments cannot be the sole responsibility of the Government. Protecting these shared assets also requires the cooperation of those who use them. Therefore, I rise this morning to remind the public of the regulations and permit requirements that help preserve our national parks for everyone's benefit.

Mr. Speaker, our parks are shared community assets whose continued enjoyment depends upon each of us using them with care and respect. I therefore wish to remind the public that, from April 1 to October 31, dogs and horses are not permitted on public beaches at any time. These measures help maintain clean, safe beaches for everyone during the peak summer [season].

Mr. Speaker, responsible use also means ensuring that organised events are properly planned and managed. Our permitting system is not simply an administrative exercise; it helps to protect park infrastructure, coordinate resources and ensure everyone can safely enjoy these shared spaces. Small events, including bonfires, require permit applications to be submitted at least five days in advance, while events at the Botanical Gardens or the Arboretum require at least 14 days' notice. Applications for these events may be submitted online at gov.bm/parks-special-permit, or in person at the Department of Parks located at Global House, 43 Church Street.

For larger events involving ticket sales, food or alcohol vendors, live music, DJs or sporting activities, organisers are required to provide several months' notice. This allows the Department to coordinate with stakeholders, allocate resources and ensure appropriate oversight before and after each event. Applications must be submitted by email to parksdept@gov.bm or delivered directly to the Department.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has invested considerable time and resources into improving our parks, and the permitting process is one of the key tools that allows us to protect that investment. Proper planning helps ensure events are well managed, our environment is safeguarded and our parks remain in excellent condition for everyone. We therefore encourage organisers and promoters to plan ahead and work closely with the Department.

Mr. Speaker, while many residents enjoy our parks throughout the summer, no period places greater demand on these public spaces than the Cup Match holiday. As we prepare for one of Bermuda's most cherished traditions, I would like to remind the public of the camping arrangements that will once again be in place.

Currently, camping with a valid permit is permitted at three designated locations, Ferry Point Park, Chaplin Bay, and Higgs and Horseshoe Islands. Permits may be obtained in advance from the Department of Parks at Global House. As in previous years, however, camping in most park areas will be permitted with-

out a permit from Wednesday, July 29 until the end of the day on Sunday, August 2.

To help manage demand and ensure everyone's safety, members of the public are asked to observe the following guidelines:

- Camping is not permitted at Coney Island, Blue Hole Park, Cooper's Island Nature Reserve or the dune area behind Jobson's Cove.
- Graffiti or markings must not be used to reserve camping spaces or mark trees.
- Tents and ropes must not be erected before July 29. Any unauthorised structures placed beforehand will be removed.
- A valid bonfire licence is required for any bonfire activity.

Further information will be shared as the Cup Match holiday approaches.

Mr. Speaker, our parks and beaches belong to every Bermudian. They are places where families gather, traditions are celebrated and lifelong memories are created. This Government will continue investing in these important public spaces, but their long-term success depends upon a shared commitment from all of us.

Whether you are spending the day at the beach, organising an event, or enjoying the Cup Match holiday, I encourage everyone to plan ahead. Respect the established rules and help us preserve these spaces for future generations. Together, we can ensure that Bermuda's parks remain safe, welcoming and a source of pride throughout the summer and beyond.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The final Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs. Minister.

EARTH STATIONS LICENSING, PROPOSED REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

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

Mr. Speaker, this morning I rise to update this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda on the progress being made in the Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Department of Energy, to establish a modern, proportionate, and investment-ready [framework for the licensing of earth stations](#) in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, satellite communications are expanding rapidly around the world, driven by the growth of low earth orbit satellite networks, rising demand for [broadband] connectivity, and new commercial and governmental space activities. Systems such as Starlink and other low [earth] orbit satellite networks are changing the way connectivity is delivered. They are creating new opportunities for residents, businesses, governments, vessels, aircraft, and jurisdictions that are prepared to support responsible satellite services and related infrastructure.

Bermuda is increasingly considered as a potential jurisdiction for satellite services and infrastructure. As a small but sophisticated jurisdiction, we must prepare with discipline. Mr. Speaker, Bermuda must prepare now, with a framework that is clear for operators, transparent for stakeholders, and aligned with international obligations. The proposed framework for the licensing of earth stations is the final stage of policy development under Bermuda's National Space Strategy. It positions the Island to compete for satellite investment and to host satellite infrastructure on clear terms.

Mr. Speaker, earth stations play a critical role in satellite communications. They provide the ground-based infrastructure that enables the transmission and reception of signals between satellites and terrestrial networks. This infrastructure can include fixed gateway and tracking facilities, such as those associated with space-related operations at Cooper's Island in St. David's; user terminals, such as satellite dishes and end-user equipment that connect a person or business to a satellite network; and earth stations in motion operating on aircraft and vessels.

Bermuda's existing legislation provides a strong foundation for electronic communications licensing and spectrum management. That foundation includes the Telecommunications Act [1986], the Regulatory Authority Act [2011], the Electronic Communications Act [2011], and the Personal Information Protection Act 2016. No dedicated policy framework yet addresses the licensing and operation of earth stations. That policy gap, therefore, must be addressed if Bermuda is to provide the clarity, certainty, and confidence required to support responsible growth in this sector.

Mr. Speaker, to address this matter, the Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Department of Energy, has developed a proposed National Earth Stations Licensing Framework. The proposed [regulatory] framework will sit within the remit of the Regulatory Authority of Bermuda, which has responsibility for the regulation of Bermuda's electronic communications sector, including communications services, spectrum management, equipment certification, and compliance oversight. The Ministry sets the policy direction. The Regulatory Authority gives it effect through the appropriate licensing, authorisation, and compliance arrangements within its statutory mandate. A clear licensing framework gives certainty to operators, transparency for stakeholders, and confidence for investors.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed framework recognises that satellite communications in Bermuda will require appropriate authorisation [across] three key areas. First, the licensing of commercial satellite services, including low earth orbit offerings such as Starlink. Second, the approval of earth station infrastructure, based on the scale of the facility, its operational purpose, and the level of interference risk. Third, the authorisation of spectrum use, to ensure that radio frequencies are managed efficiently and that other communications services are properly protected. This ap-

proach is proportionate and risk based, recognising that not all earth stations are the same.

Mr. Speaker, the framework also sets technical, security, and compliance principles. These include network integrity, cybersecurity, data protection, interference management, reporting, inspections, and ongoing compliance with licence conditions. It also proposes a proportionate approach to earth stations in motion, such as those operating on aircraft and vessels. This [includes] recognising foreign licensing where appropriate, while ensuring that Bermuda maintains the necessary regulatory oversight to protect its national interests, public safety, spectrum environment, and international obligations.

Mr. Speaker, public consultation on the Proposed Regulatory Framework for the Licensing of Earth Stations closed on 19 June 2026. The consultation sought feedback on the licensing architecture, the spectrum authorisation approach, the treatment of earth stations in motion, compliance obligations, and spectrum charging. Members of the public and key stakeholders, such as local telecommunications operators, international satellite and space [industry] participants submitted feedback during the consultation period which concentrated on licensing processes, spectrum management, investment readiness, cybersecurity, health and safety, and Bermuda's opportunity to position itself within the global satellite and space economy. The Ministry values that engagement. These submissions that were shared will help to finalise the Policy to ensure that it is technically sound and workable for Bermuda's needs.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key themes that stood out to the Operators was Bermuda wanting to be investment ready, with a clear pathway from first engagement through technical assessment, licensing, and ongoing oversight. The objective reaches past the licensing decision. Satellite activity in Bermuda should build a durable space ecosystem that creates opportunities for innovation, investment, and economic growth for Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Energy is currently reviewing the comments and recommendations received. Further consultation will continue with key stakeholders to refine any information that was presented to the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, alongside the public consultation that has concluded, the Ministry has engaged directly with public sector partners whose responsibilities intersect with [satellite] communications and earth station operations. The Department has consulted directly with the Regulatory Authority and the Bermuda Airport Authority, and these discussions will continue as the Policy is refined. Ongoing collaboration is intended to ensure that the proposed framework is aligned with international best practices, through operational requirements, to ensure that Bermuda's broader strategic objectives are reached.

The Ministry also recognises the importance of the maritime sector and will extend this engagement to the Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority. Given the increasing use of satellite communications and earth stations on vessels, this dialogue will help to ensure that the final framework appropriately reflects maritime considerations and supports a coordinated, whole-of-government approach to regulating emerging technologies.

Mr. Speaker, following the review of submissions, the Government, in consultation with the Regulatory Authority, will prepare a Statement of Results and identify any key issues raised. Once the Policy has been finalised, it is the intention to provide the opportunity and the appropriate policy direction, in accordance with the applicable legislation, to [support] the Regulatory Authority in establishing the necessary licensing, [authorisation], compliance, and oversight [arrangements for the earth] stations.

This work advances Bermuda's National Space Strategy, Mr. Speaker. Bermuda already has internationally recognised strengths in regulation, insurance, risk management, financial services, compliance, and global business. Mr. Speaker, the earth stations regulation is one part of a larger plan to keep Bermuda connected and prepared for the industries that will shape the global economy.

In closing, I thank the members of the public, the industry participants, and our public sector partners, Mr. Speaker, including the Regulatory Authority and the Bermuda Airport Authority, who engaged during the consultation. The Ministry looks forward to future engagements with the Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority as the work progresses.

Lastly, the summary will be published thereafter through the support from the Department of Communications. I look forward to updating the Honourable House as the important work progresses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a conclusion of Statements for this morning.

[Inaudible interjection]

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: That brings us to a conclusion of Statements this morning.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: This morning we do have written questions, and then we will have questions on the State-

ments. The written questions actually require written responses, so there's no discussion on the floor.

So, we will start the clock on the Question Period. And the written [questions] this morning were from the Opposition Leader to the Junior Minister of Justice, and the spokesman for Education.

Have you received your written answers?

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

QUESTION PERIOD

QUESTIONS: STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT, DISCIPLINARY FRAMEWORK; AND PUBLIC SCHOOL CLASSROOM ENROLMENT STATS

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister of Education please provide this Honourable House all evidence, including survey results, consultation findings, staff feedback reports, meeting summaries, or other documented information relied upon by the Ministry, to support the conclusion that educators and school leaders have confidence in the current Student Code of Conduct and disciplinary framework and its consistent application across public schools?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide, for each government preschool, primary school, middle school, and senior school the number of students enrolled in each classroom on September 30, 2025, and on June 1, 2026?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please provide, for each government preschool, primary school, middle school, and senior school the projected number of students assigned to each classroom for the upcoming school year 2026/2027?

The Speaker: Okay, we will now move on to the questions [arising] from Statements this morning.

And the first Statement, Mr. Premier, you have questions from the Shadow Minister of Finance.

MP DeCouto, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY (BMA) 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the update, Mr. Premier, Honourable Premier.

Your Statement alluded to various work regarding rules and regulations for the insurance industry being done by the BMA. Did this work include any con-

sideration of regulating the domestic insurance industry with respect to premium rates, or regulation, or monitoring of relationships between the domestic insurers and providers, such as pharmacies or health care providers?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, as has been said in public statements those matters rest with the Government of Bermuda, and we've already made statements on those particular matters. I know that the Honourable Member wishes to continue to speak on that, but the Government will continue to go through a regulated process, or a process to make sure that we get this right, proper, and correct.

He would know that the Bermuda Monetary Authority deals with prudential supervision matters, where matters related to the things of which he's talking about, regulatory matters, lie with the Government. The Minister of Health has already responded on that. Our platform is very clear on our commitments, as is the work that is taking place also within the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

My question actually alludes to the entire domestic insurance industry, not just health. So, for example, auto, personal lines, property. Could the Honourable Premier and Finance Minister indicate whether his Government is considering regulation of rates in those areas?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Consistent with our platform priorities, there has been engagement with the Bermuda Monetary Authority on matters that are related to home insurance. Those matters are being currently led by the Junior Minister of Finance and will be reported on in due course consistent with our platform and Throne Speech priorities, which have been spelled out very clearly. And this Government makes sure that we follow through and execute on them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second supplemental.

The Speaker: Second [supplementary].

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I take it from the Premier's recent comments, the most recent comment, that in fact the BMA could be involved in regulation of domestic insurance with respect to these issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . Is that true? Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, there are different matters related to different things. On these particular issues there may be conversations with the Bermuda Monetary Authority, but those decisions rest with the Ministry of Finance, as the Bermuda Monetary Authority is responsible for *prudential* supervision, as the Honourable Member is clearly aware.

The Speaker: New question?

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY (BMA) 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, second question, Mr. Speaker.

I am sure that the Premier is aware that in many jurisdictions the regulators encompass a wide variety of responsibilities, including prudential regulation and consumer issues, such as rates. Would the Government think it is appropriate that the mandate of the BMA could be expanded to include things such as rates and customer protection? For example, I believe they regulate conduct in the insurers, so this seems reasonable to me.

What is the Premier's view of that?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is certainly straying away from the Statement. He's trying to get into a debate. But the Honourable Member should read what has already been published, stated in this Honourable House in the past. Those matters are in the public domain.

There were conversations and discussions around financial services conduct. Financial services conduct is not going to be with Bermuda Monetary Authority. Financial services conduct is going to remain with the Government. Those things were stated in previous Statements inside this House, and the work continues on those particular matters.

I encourage the Honourable Member, as Shadow Minister of Finance, to read previously published statements on these particular matters. And if there is a change in government policy direction, we will update this Honourable House as we did when we spoke about those particular matters.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Supplementary. Could the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance provide an update as to when we might receive further information on this apparently ongoing work?
Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: As they are progressed, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second [supplementary] or third question?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Thank you, Premier. Those were the only questions on your Statement.

The second Statement this morning was by the Minister of Housing. Minister De Silva, you have questions, first from the Shadow Minister of Finance.
MP DeCouto.

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that update, Honourable Minister.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am going to be guided by you because I know there was a lengthy public statement, or press conference, that front-ran these [Ministerial] Statements. Now, in my view, that's contrary to the Ministerial Code of Conduct, but I am going to seek your guidance to make sure—

The Speaker: We accepted his Statement because he brought more information in.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —my questions are not stepping over there.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Honourable Minister referred to housing projects that were, unfortunately . . . and I say this with deep . . . you know, with deep, deep feeling . . . unfortunately, that the OBA, when they came into office in 2012, had to halt.

I am sure the Honourable Minister is aware that the 2012 budget had a \$127 million deficit prior to capital spending and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, this is important for the question—

The Speaker: You should—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and, in fact, that the loans, further loans, had to be taken out to pay the civil servants to—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Allow me, this is important for the question.

The Speaker: Well, put the question so we can get to the answer.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, given that, would the Minister have preferred that housing had been built or that civil servants not have been paid?
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: So, your question is going back to something that happened prior.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Honourable Minister referred in his Statement to housing that had . . . housing projects that had to be stopped by the OBA, which was because of a lack of money. And so, I am asking him which he would have preferred to happen, given that statement.

The Speaker: Basically, the fact that you made a reference to the . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is so silly.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay, that's fine, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is, this Government cares about the people of the country and we will do both.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They found money for the America's Cup, but they couldn't find money for that.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Would you like a supplementary or new question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, new question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, thank you.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We know from public statements that the financing was arranged at between 6.0 per cent to 6.25 per cent. Also, the name of the bank the financing was obtained from was also put into the public. Did the Government shop this financing around or obtain bids on the financing from multiple financial institutions?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Supplementary. How many institutions were solicited and how many responded?
Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I'll bring that info, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
He provided that he will get the information for you. He does not have it with him at the time.
A second supplementary or third question?

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

The Speaker: Third question, okay.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: By my calculations, the Government financing for its own debt is around high 3 per cent, so this financing is in the 6.0 per cent to 6.5 per cent. My calculation is, Mr. Speaker, that this means this financing costs about a million to two million dollars more—

The Speaker: Question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —than if Government directly provided the financing.

Why did the Minister not use financing directly from Government, which would have saved the people money?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: I would like to answer.

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance will answer.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am happy to answer, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: No, no, no, no. I am happy to answer because, see, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is using Question [Period] not to ask questions, but to put forward points under matters relating to innuendo. And the Honourable Member cannot have it both ways. The Honourable Member cannot say that we should pay off debts—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: —while at the same time—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He is imputing improper motive.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.
State your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He's imputing improper motive. He's asking a question, a fair question, and it requires a fair answer.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: To categorise him as just, you know, grandstanding is wrong.
It's a question.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay. The Premier's going to answer the question for us now.

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

I appreciate your ruling on this matter because they get up every single time—

The Speaker: You can answer the question—

Hon. E. David Burt: I've got it. They get up every single time on this matter.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, just—

Hon. E. David Burt: So, here's the thing, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Just answer . . . just get to answering the question and everybody will be fine.

Hon. E. David Burt: Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member cannot have it both ways.

An Hon. Member: What's the answer?

Hon. E. David Burt: You understand what I am saying? He can't have both ways.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, he can't in one breath say that we need to make sure that we pay off or retire the debt and, on the other hand say, *Oh, well, you shouldn't pay off or retire the debt.*

What is it called? So, you know, the rhetorical question of which he is asking, *would you prefer for us not to pay off the debt and all the rest?* the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry of Finance understands, works with colleagues to make sure that we can fund particular matters, while remaining inside of our particular envelopes. The funding that was done for this was done and arranged with full scrutiny by the Ministry of Finance and will allow us to do two things, Mr. Speaker. It will allow us to advance on housing—on the most ambitious house building project in the history of this country—while also retiring \$605 million of debt next year.

We can do both, Mr. Speaker.

So, the Honourable Member earlier was asking questions about would we prefer to pay civil servants or would we prefer to build housing? This shows a Government that can do both, Mr. Speaker. And that is the reason why we have gone in this direction, Mr. Speaker.

So, we would know what would happen if they were in office. They would choose one or the other. We, Mr. Speaker, can do both.

The Speaker: You answered the question. Thank you.

That was your third question. Do you have a supplementary to your third question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, yes. And the Premier spoke quite fully, so I imagine I would have quite a lot of leeway in my supplementary.

The Speaker: Well, well, well . . . no, no, no, no, no, no. To be fair, you had a lot of leeway before you got to your question.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You had a lot of leeway. So, the Premier was given the same privilege of leeway before he got to the answer.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I appreciate it, Mr. Speaker. The Premier referred to all the detailed vetting—

The Speaker: You don't have to take a lot of leeway on this one. Just put your question first.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: In the consideration of the options, what amount of the \$64 million is required to be spent this year, and how did that feed into the consideration of the financing options . . . this financial year?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Minister can respond to that one.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I can.

Mr. Speaker, all of it, because this Government has an ambitious programme to build 229 homes in the next 14 to 18 months—229 homes!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Is there a second supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. So, my understanding is all of the \$64 million will be spent by April, but this project is going for 18 months from now. How will they finance the portion of the project that happens after this financial year for the rest of the 18 months?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, if I have one apple in this hand and one apple in that hand, I have two apples. The Honourable Finance Minister *[sic]* wants to know . . . look, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. E. David Burt: Shadow Minister of Finance. Don't give him that—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So—

Hon. E. David Burt: And he will stay Shadow for a long, long, long, long, long time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The *wishful* Minister of Finance.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is this. We have secured \$64 million. We will break ground in August. This project will be paid for before the fiscal year is finished, i.e. . . . Mr. Speaker, you will know, and surely people in this House will know, that if you make a purchase today, you may not pay it all today. But by the time you have . . . you make a down payment on your car, Mr. Speaker. You make a down payment on a house. You have a mortgage. By the time that that 15-year mortgage is up, Mr. Speaker, you will have paid it in full. That project will be paid for.

And let me say something else, Mr. Speaker, that might help Honourable Members next door. I said in my Statement: I received \$114.75 million.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Not just \$64 [million]. Mr. Speaker, \$114.75 million. And listen—

Hon. E. David Burt: He doesn't listen.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Another \$50 million will be coming here in a couple of weeks to announce another development and more houses for our people, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Keep going!

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Do you have a second supplementary to your third question?

None? Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I dropped my papers. I was not quite finished. I just wanted to mention one more thing.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, let him know that we are building houses.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What is important, Mr. Speaker, is the Honourable Member next door, they said that “at a high interest rate.” Mr. Speaker, this Gov-

ernment . . . if we have to pay 7.0 per cent or 7.5 per cent to house our people instead of spending \$100 million on a sailboat race, we will do it, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And if, Mr. Speaker, rather than spend . . . rather than spend \$250 million dollars at Morgan's Point, we will build houses, Mr. Speaker!

Hon. E. David Burt: Tell them!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: One thing we will do—

Hon. E. David Burt: Tell them!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —is we will give our people what they need. Not what some of their rich friends need, or want.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, Members, Members—

An Hon. Member: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Members, there are other Members who would like to put questions on that Statement.

An Hon. Member: Supplemental to that.
I had a supplemental—

The Speaker: MP King, would you like to put your question to that Statement?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Honourable Members and to the listening public.

Regarding the building of affordable housing, the Opposition is in full support of that because we recognise the need, 100 per cent. Towards that end—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: I am asking, Was a crime prevention, through environmental design, assessment done regarding the planning process for the housing development? Because what we do know is that housing development projects, affordable housing development projects, are high risk areas for adverse childhood experiences, crime, et cetera. So, I am asking whether or not an assessment, a crime prevention [assessment] through environmental design, was done on the proposed housing development.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, MP King, for your support. We really do like to hear that from the other side sometimes. And so do the people of the country.

With regard to an environmental impact study, you will be happy to know that we have had many conversations about what impacts these housing developments will cause. And so, it is not lost on us, Mr. Speaker. He mentioned at-risk and other things. But we have talked about . . . transportation for . . . sewage supply, water supply, amenities within the areas for people. So, yes, all those things have been considered and will continue to be considered as we develop more and more homes.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

[Inaudible interjection]

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: When one is . . . if one is appropriate, one will be given.

The Honourable Deputy Premier spoke about particular aspects of the assessments that were done, but he was not actually referring to the crime prevention through environmental design assessment. What he was talking about was basically the physical structure of the buildings being fit for purpose, I suspect.

But what I am talking about is an approach to building affordable housing that takes into consideration the risks that are posed for that particular group: lighting, access, visibility, open spaces, exactly how the place is designed to reduce the likelihood of crime, violence and antisocial behaviour. Because what we do know is that persons who require affordable housing are at greater risk of suffering those particular harms.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: It is a fact.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: It is a fact.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, that is insulting to every Bermudian that lives in this country. To insinuate that when you are moving *those people* to *those areas*, have you done a risk assessment? That's an insult to the people of this country; it does not deserve a reply.

Mr. Robert King: Supplemental question.

The Speaker: Supplemental question.

Mr. Robert King: It is apparent that the Deputy Premier does not understand what I am asking. I am talking about an assessment that will require the specific services to address the particular needs that are presented with populations who are experiencing specific needs related to their particular circumstances.

It has shown success in Singapore, the UK, Canada and other jurisdictions at creating safer environments, which is what we need to do. So, this is an approach that creates a safer environment. We are not labelling these persons as criminals. What we are suggesting is taking note of the fact that they are more susceptible to having problems in their community. And we need to be systematic and strategic to make sure that we provide them with safe housing and that we protect the oncoming generations as well. That is the reason why I asked the question.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, all I have to say again is, wow.

And let me say to the Honourable Member, does he think that it is all . . . people who find themselves struggling a little bit that want affordable homes? There are middle class people in this country who want affordable homes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Exactly!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Middle class people, Mr. Speaker, who want affordable homes.

Is the OBA saying that this housing programme that we have, this aggressive housing programme that we have, is for all *those kinds* of people, Mr. Speaker?

I am sorry, but he should have his own Members standing up objecting to that statement.

Hon. E. David Burt: Correct.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Without that, Mr. Speaker, I can only assume that they support it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: Members, Members, just a minute.

Mr. Robert King: —I understood.

The Speaker: Clarification . . . now you are on your second question, correct? Because you are done with your supplementaries on your first question.

Mr. Robert King: Correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay, second question.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Mr. Robert King: My understanding was that as of 2025, Mr. Speaker, 1,331 persons were in desperate need of housing. I remember that 71 persons were on the critical list for housing. So, it would suggest that the affordable housing is for those persons, and not the persons that the Deputy Premier is suggesting also need affordable housing.

So, we are talking about this—

The Speaker: So . . . put the—

Mr. Robert King: So, the question is, these affordable housing units are going to be for the 71 persons or those persons who are on critical housing list?

The Speaker: We are already getting . . . Premier, Deputy—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, these homes are for all of our people.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: When we produce 229 homes in the next 14 months, we will look at the people who are on those lists, and they will be given homes accordingly. Certainly, the Honourable Member must know that. The OBA must know that. They were in Government for five years. Well, that's right; we forgot they didn't build any.

The Speaker: That was your second question.

Do you have a supplementary to that or is it your third question?

Mr. Robert King: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: So then the question is, What is the eligibility requirement to be able to successfully be considered for one of these houses? Because perhaps it's for the . . .

The Speaker: Okay, well the question is, What's the eligibility requirement?

Mr. Robert King: What is the eligibility requirement?
Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, the eligibility is for people in this country who need homes will have an opportunity to get them.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary . . . that was your first supplementary. Do you have a second supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: So—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

So, what is the actual eligibility criteria and what is the process? Because I think the listening public would want to know that, and potentially it will be more than 71 persons who are on the critical list.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, everyone who signs up to get on the list has to have a meeting with the people at Bermuda Housing Corporation. And means testing is done based on those conversations.

The Speaker: Do you have a third . . . no, you used your two supplementaries for your second question.

Do you have a third question?

Mr. Robert King: I have a third question.

The Speaker: Third question.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Mr. Robert King: Persons who are considered . . . or who are successful applicants, will there be individual support plans for the families who are successful to ensure that the services are available to ensure their success?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I am not sure exactly what the question is, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert King: Previously, there was a CMIT [Cross Ministry Intervention Team] programme [in] the Department of Child and Family Services, Morgan's point, eight units for families and they had wraparound services to ensure that those persons who required housing, similar folks, that their needs were met for the children, for the parents and others. I am asking if there is going to be an individual support plan for persons receiving the housing so that they can exit the system.

The Speaker: Any—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I get offended (right?) for the people of this country.

Hon. E. David Burt: Everyone should be offended.

An Hon. Member: Everybody.

The Speaker: Let him respond.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I really do, when he talks about *those people* . . . now he's referring . . . yes, he said *similar people*. Well, what . . . I mean, that is just an insult to everybody. Then he talked about the emergency homes. I think that's what he's referring to.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of information, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, I do not accept.

The Speaker: He doesn't have to take a point of information.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, he referred to the emergency homes at Morgan's Point that we had up several years ago. Those were emergency homes, completely different situations, Mr. Speaker.

Look, that Honourable Member, Mr. Speaker, needs to stop trying to make political points over people who are in this country and have struggling times. He needs to—

Mr. Robert King: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Robert King: He's imputing improper motive. The reason why I am asking the questions is to ensure that those persons in this community who require suitable housing get it.

The Speaker: Okay.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I don't want to have a . . . to go back and forth. But I think both sides are saying the same thing. The Minister is saying that the housing will provide for those who desperately need it on whatever the list is. (I don't want to use the wrong term for the list.) Whatever . . . the emergency list. Those on that. And there are families who also need assistance for private housing who are not on the list. Both will be covered.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's absolutely right, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, Members of this House know, and I have said it publicly enough, we have different categories. You have critical, urgent, and the need. Mr. Speaker, let's be clear about another thing that we plan on doing in the next 12 months. We will build some homes for people to buy. Will the Opposition Member then say, *Well, congratulations*, and then say, *Well, are you putting "some" of those people, are you going to let "those" people buy homes?*

Mr. Speaker, we will provide affordable homes for rent for our people, all of our people—

Hon. E. David Burt: All Bermudians.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: All Bermudians, 100 per cent. And when we start building homes for sale, they will be for all Bermudians, Mr. Speaker. We will give opportunities for our people to live a healthy, happy life that they didn't have previous.

The Speaker: This is your second supplementary with your third question.

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

The Speaker: Your last question.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Of course, we are in agreement with the overall philosophy. And what we are concerned with—

The Speaker: Put the question. Put the question.

Mr. Robert King: Yes, I am going to put the question, sir.

Will there be consideration to drafting legislation and/or using existing legislation to make these protected areas the same way that you have an increased penalty zone for certain areas, sports clubs, to ensure that those neighbourhoods are protected from antisocial behaviour? Because we want to create a safe neighbourhood that is safe for the persons who are going to be there. So, might they rely upon existing legislation in consideration of that?

That's my final question. Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I pause because does that really dignify a response? Really, Mr. Speaker, in this House—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That we bring legislation for people that we are going to put in housing to make to

what . . . would you want to build a fence around it? Come on, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

All right. MP King, you have exhausted your questions.

MP Pearman, you had indicated you wanted questions for this Statement.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: It wasn't—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Oh, no, no, no—

[Laughter]

The Speaker: MP Fahy, would you like to put your questions now?

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

The Speaker: Mistakes are made sometimes.

[Inaudible interjection]

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister's . . . one of his last statements to say that we are all in this for the purposes of Bermudians, 100 per cent agreed. Op-eds and things that I write are critiques and also suggestions, and I think that's important for people to understand.

In terms of specific questions to the Minister's Statement, the Minister said in his Statement that a *rigorous technical* and procurement evaluation was undertaken by the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee. Please, would the Minister explain to this Honourable House now what was undertaken in terms of a *rigorous technical and procurement evaluation by the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee*?

An Hon. Member: Excellent question.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I will be happy to give a written response because I could sit here and answer that for half an hour. The fact of the matter is, that we did and we do have an Affordable [Housing Advisory] Committee that is headed by a host of individuals who are professionals in this country. Those were the individuals, along with industry partners, those in

the construction industry, the Chamber of Commerce, the Construction Association. I could go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

I can assure you that that Affordable [Housing Advisory] Committee that we have, Mr. Speaker, have done yeoman work with regard . . . and that's why I said *rigorous*, and it was, Mr. Speaker. We have been at [it] for a long time, and that particular Member, the MP, who's asked this House over and over again, *Where is it? When is it? When is it coming? Where is it?* It is here, Mr. Speaker. If he wants finite details, breakdowns, I will be happy to give it any time.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary or a second question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: I do have a supplementary; one comment. I would appreciate that the Minister bring a written statement as to that rigorous process that was undertaken. It is one thing to say; it is another thing to present, because I think the people of Bermuda need to understand that process fully, given the amount of money that is being spent.

Not impugning integrity of any of those Members, but I think it is important that people understand that process. That's the nature of the question, and I don't—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Michael Fahy: No. No, that's okay.

The Speaker: So, so . . . okay.

Hon. Michael Fahy: That's okay.

The Speaker: Okay, so the question is—

Hon. Michael Fahy: Did that process . . . I do have a supplementary. Did that process involve any form of RFP process for the purposes of these units that are to be built by Coastal Precast Systems on the three sites that are going to involve the spending of \$64 million?

Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: As I said previously, Mr. Speaker, we have spent months and months looking at every building system in the world. And based on the information that we received . . . and there were many, Mr. Speaker, hundreds and hundreds, literally, from many people, many organisations. You may have sent me one, Mr. Speaker.

So those, I am very confident in that Committee and the work that they have done, Mr. Speaker, and that is why I am happy and very confident, standing on

my feet and making these types of announcements to the House and to the country.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or . . . second question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you. Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, it is fair to say then that there was no RFP in respect of this particular project for \$64 million across three sites. Is that correct?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's correct, Mr. Speaker, and I will tell you why. Because we know how RFPs work. And I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker, if we would have been through an RFP on this particular matter, we would be here next year, Mr. Speaker, and we wouldn't have built a home.

By the time you go through that process, select and get it done . . . because you will know, Mr. Speaker, to do an RFP process, certain plans have to be produced at a certain level. Certain things have to be done at certain levels. Mr. Speaker, by the time we would have awarded any building to any company, Mr. Speaker, guess what? By the time we had done that, we wouldn't have built a home. But in this particular case, by the time that would have been done, we will have over 200 homes. Thank you.

The Speaker: Do you have a second question?

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

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Housing Strategy was published at the beginning of May 2026, and some six weeks later, we are in this place being advised that Coastal Precast Systems is going to be spending \$64 million across three different sites.

Mr. Speaker, when did the consultation process end in respect of that Housing Strategy?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: If you would have read it, Mr. Speaker, you would know it was June 12.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

So, can the Honourable Minister then please advise when the contract was signed with Coastal Precast Systems for the purposes of groundbreaking in August?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to say that that contract was signed yesterday.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or new question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: No, that's fine. I've got the information. I appreciate that.

The Speaker: Okay, so—

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, third question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Third question.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDA AFFORDABLE HOUSING—FIRST PHASE UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: The Minister has said that \$64 million is being ring-fenced for the three sites in respect of 84 homes. That amounts to about \$762,000 per unit. I am not, obviously, aware at this moment of every single size of every single unit, et cetera, but that is not the point. The question that I have is, Does that amount of \$64 million include all excavations, all fit-outs, all the attendant work, including the purchase and transport of the precast systems and the building and construction of same?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I am happy to confirm it does. And I am also happy to confirm, Mr. Speaker, you will know that the cost of construction, traditional building in this country right now, is anywhere between \$700 and \$1,000-plus per square foot for the building of a house. This price is key in hand, Mr. Speaker, all mechanical, electrical, foundations, footings, landscaping. This is key in hand, cut the ribbon, everybody moves in, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to announce that.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

So, the Minister is confident that there will be no overspend in respect of \$64 million, because one would have to assume that subcontracts must have been signed and agreements put in place for the Min-

ister to be able to make that kind of statement that this includes *everything*.

Can the Minister explain?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Again, Mr. Speaker, we have an Affordable [Housing Advisory] Committee. They are professionals in this country. They know exactly what everything costs.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Honourable Member who sits in another place as a lawyer, if I asked him for an estimate what a certain case might cost based on his experience, I am sure he can give me an idea.

So, but I go further than that because a lawyer might be able to give you an estimate based on X, Y, Z. I am confident, Mr. Speaker, very confident, [in] the people that we have on our Affordable [Housing Advisory] Committee and their subcommittees and the people involved. I have been in rooms at times, Mr. Speaker, where we have had 30 individuals in the room, 30 individuals, many of them . . . some of his colleagues. So, we have had a cross section of people, a cross section of professionals. And, Mr. Speaker, I do talk confident because I am very, very satisfied and confident that the people we have involved in doing this work know what they are doing.

The Speaker: Your last supplementary . . . your second supplementary.

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

In no way was I suggesting that the people that the Minister has engaged with do not know what they are doing. I am not sure why we had to listen to that.

What . . . I have asked a very simple question. Is the Minister saying that there are going to be no overruns from the \$64 million that has been ring-fenced for this particular project?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Absolutely, yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

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

The Speaker: Fine. That brings to a conclusion of questions for that Statement, Minister.

Now, the next Statement that had questions [was by] the Minister of Works.

Minister Adams, MP Campbell has questions for you.

QUESTION 1: NATIONAL PARKS, SUMMER REMINDER ON RESPONSIBLE USE

Mr. Vance Campbell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for your Statement.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key areas for enjoyment of our parks, particularly when it comes to camping and the beaches, are the bathrooms—and in particular, the toilets. So, I would like to ask the Minister if the bathrooms and toilets were one of the areas focused upon when he spoke about upgrades and improvements.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

The short answer is yes; the bathrooms are being focused on. What I do know is that we have taken the initiative to increase the frequency that the bathrooms are cleaned. But most notably, I think, and most importantly, we do have plans in place that are now with Planning to actually renovate bathrooms that are within our most popular beaches.

The Speaker: Thank you.

First supplementary . . . Oh, you are finished? Your first supplementary or second question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: First supplemental.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Vance Campbell: These checks for cleanings, do they also look for maintenance issues as well when they are checking or cleaning the bathrooms?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: So, to be fair and to be clear, so the vendors that we have are cleaning, are doing cleaning only. However, there are members of the Department of Parks who do their checks and balances in reference to maintenance.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or second question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Second supplementary.

As we move into our summer season, can the Minister advise on the opening hours of the bathroom facilities and whether these hours are increased during the heavy-use periods such as Cup Match?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of the specific hours, now I am going off the top of my head, so I will endeavour to get the

Honourable Member the specific answers to that question.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second . . . sorry, second question? You used your two supplementaries on the first one.

QUESTION 2: NATIONAL PARKS, SUMMER REMINDER ON RESPONSIBLE USE

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, I have a second question.

I would like to know if the Minister could provide a telephone number, for the general public, if they encounter a bathroom facility when they are trying to enjoy the use of the parks and beaches. Is there a telephone number that they can call to report maintenance issues?

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, if I could refer back to the Honourable Member's previous question, many of the bathrooms, in particular those that are in our more popular beaches, are open 24/7. And if anyone has any issues, they are more than welcome to call the Department of Parks or email them. I think I gave the email address in my Statement.

The Speaker: All right. That was your—

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. . . . sorry, if I can.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Jache Adams: I just got it. So, for reference, the Department of Parks can be reached at 236-5902. That is the main line for the Department of Parks.

The Speaker: I like your efficiency, sir. Thank you.
Is there a supplementary to your second question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes.

The Speaker: Or do you want to do your third question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary. Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Vance Campbell: During weekends and public holidays, is there a response team . . . if someone should call or email the department, is there a response team who will come out and address the issue, or issues, reported during the weekends and public holidays?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm. Okay. That will be your second supplementary or third question?

Mr. Vance Campbell: I have no more questions. Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

The Speaker: Thank you. Okay.

Members, that brings us to a close of questions on Statements this morning. We will now move on down the Order Paper.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member wish to speak to that?

Deputy Speaker.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Good morning to the House and the listening public.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer congratulations to a few schools.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Firstly, The Berkeley Institute. Congratulations to all of its graduates and, in particular, those graduates who received special awards. I want to say they acquitted themselves with extreme poise and aplomb and, indeed, with their scholastic efforts.

Congratulations to St. David's Primary on their graduations of their young ones. And, in particular, to the recipients of the Leadership Awards, that's young Miss Pitcher and young Mr. Simmons, who found themselves at East End Primary at a celebration called Future Leaders Awards. And I would like to also move on to congratulate all of the Future Leaders' awardees that received their certificates at East End Primary on Monday of this week.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Carlton Tyrrell, who was the brainchild of the Future Leaders Awards some 20 years ago. And the Future Leaders Awards ceremony has celebrated its 20 years of existence.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend a hearty congratulations to East End Primary. They had a spectacular graduation ceremony. And to young Mr. Nya Foggo-Outerbridge, who was the top student at East End Primary.

Our future is looking quite cheerful, Mr. Speaker, because many of these young people are ac-

quitting themselves with extreme comportment and deportment, Mr. Speaker. They are doing a superb job. So, I feel very hopeful that as we move forward and our young people take the reins, Bermuda is going to be okay.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Premier jumped up very quickly that time.

Deputy Premier, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like the House to give congratulations to a group of people up in the West End. Mr. Speaker, I had the good fortune to attend a meeting along with my colleague, Minister Tinee Furbert, on Tuesday night. And we were asked to come and speak, Mr. Speaker, to a group of seniors.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it was a very informative meeting. And I would like to thank Charlene Webb, who was the main organiser, along with her team, Delano Beaufort, Kim Jackson, Edonna Bean, Carla Webb, Tammy Gibbons, D.M. Martin-Iris, and Claudelle Richardson. Mr. Speaker, it was a very, very fruitful meeting. I think the seniors appreciated it. We had members from organisations. We had—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Financial Assistance.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —Financial Assistance and—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Age Concern.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —Age Concern attend as well. And I think that they were very, very happy to hear from, in particular, Minister Tinee Furbert, who gave them a host of information, answered a hundred questions, Mr. Speaker. So, I would like to thank Charlene and her team for holding that event. And congratulations to her and them.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to join my colleague, Minister Owen Darrell, who congratulated two Bermudian powerboat races, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure if you saw it, but the team, the two local professional teams, one, my good friend and brother, Mr. Stephen Moniz and his team, their boat is called *Nuff Said*. They promote Bermuda and, of course, led by Luis Martins and Nick Imprescia, and also *Team Bermuda*, led by Steven Bridges and David Selley. They finished first and second. *Nuff Said* was first, and, of course, *Team Bermuda* finished second.

And, Mr. Speaker, I watched the race and it was amazing that you had two Bermuda teams, two Bermuda speedboats that actually dominated this race.

And *Nuff Said* really dominated. They destroyed the field, Mr. Speaker. I was really proud. And what was really, really comforting to hear, and I was proud, is that the amount of publicity that Bermuda got from these two boats. And, Mr. Speaker, they do this all on their own. They do not ask anybody for anything. They promote Bermuda throughout the season, and they are to be congratulated. And they have worked hard, they have put in a lot of work, they have put in a lot of time, and I hope they have a lot more of these successes in the future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Lister, would you like your time on the floor?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I would first like to start off sending congratulations. And I will . . . I know the Minister is not here, I associate the Minister of Sport. And firstly, I also associate the Opposition Leader as he is the National Swim Team Coach. I want to send congratulations to the National Swim Team who recently participated overseas.

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey!

An Hon. Member: Congratulations!

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And they represented Bermuda well, bringing home some medals.

First of all, they got first and third place in the 13 and over mixed 200 metres freestyle relay. And then there were some individual awards. Young Jacob Leclerc finished first in the 13 to 14 boys 100 freestyle. And Gabe Maranzana finished first in the 15 and over boys 50 freestyle.

Also, again, in sports, I would like to send congratulations to Ms. Yushae DeSilva Andrade who won gold at the 2026 Birmingham Boccia World [Challenger]. So again, Bermudians represent us well in all disciplines in sports.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I would also like to send congratulations to a friend of mine. So, I have known for a very long time, Ms. Alyson Thompson, who recently has produced a documentary on riots in Bermuda called *Bermuda Riots are Different*. And recently, they won an award at the UK Film Festival. So, again, I want to send congratulations to Ms. Alyson Thompson on her documentary.

And I would also like to join in with the congratulations from Member Foggo, in my role as spokesperson for Education, with all the primary, middle and . . . I know the high schools have not graduated yet. But I want to send—

An Hon. Member: Berkeley's graduating now.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Berkeley is graduating right now. But I want to send congratulations to all of those schools and students who had passing out or graduating ceremonies and congratulate them for the well done on the year they completed and for those who are graduating high school as they look forward to further education, whether in Bermuda or overseas, we wish them the best of luck.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution this morning? No one moving . . . oh, MP Tucker. You have your three minutes, MP.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, good morning. And good morning to all of my House colleagues and listening audience.

I want to start with a condolence first. I want to extend condolences to the friends and family of Mrs. Pauline Russell. People may remember her from being up at the junction of South Shore and Middle Road and selling the fruit and the smoothies and things. I first met Mrs. Russell probably in the early 2000s when I . . . she participated in a cognitive restructuring programme that I co-facilitated. Mrs. Russell and I lost touch for a while. I had not too long ago received a message that she wanted me to call her. I did. We did not connect and then the next thing I know I see that Mrs. Russell had passed away.

She was an absolutely lovely person, bubbly, always had a story, always had a laugh. Like, you could not engage Mrs. Russell without leaving with a feel-good moment. So again, I want to express condolences to her friends and to her family.

And I will just take a second just to say that that is probably one of the regrets that I have is that I was not more diligent in tracking her down to connect with her. So, I would just encourage my colleagues as well as anyone that is listening, time is not promised to anyone. So please do not always think that you have tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. I'll make the call. I'll make the connection, right?

So, on a happier note, I would like to extend congratulations to Louise Payne, who I used to work with at Conyers. I have known her for a very long time. She won *The Royal Gazette's* Fantasy League and she got a prize of \$6,000. And Minister De Silva would like to be associated with that. So, congratulations to Louise.

And as well as I would like to say congratulations to the staff of Ageing and Disability Services as they hosted their fourth annual event at the Devonshire Rec, complete with bingo, which I have seen a few seniors who have told me what a great time that they had. And that was in recognition of World Elder Abuse [Awareness] Day. And they had such a fabulous time.

And then finally, I will say congratulations to my girls, to my granddaughters, Cailin Tucker, who has just graduated from Paget Primary, and she will be off to Saltus, and as well as Riel Ming who has graduated from Dellwood [Middle] and she will be going to The Berkeley Institute.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . MP DeCouto.

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

I recently had the privilege of organising a family fun day in Warwick. And I want to extend my thanks to Warwick Workmen's Club for hosting that and everybody that was involved in putting that on. Feedback was great and we will certainly be doing it next year.

Special thanks also to Warwick Gombeys for a fabulous performance at the end, which involved the youth and I found quite moving. It's not naturally my, you know, deep background, Mr. Speaker, but I just want to share that because I think we all in Bermuda—

The Speaker: You dance to the Gombeys?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I am quite there yet.

The Speaker: All right.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am not quite there yet, but it was fabulous.

The Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Now, I also want to congratulate Mr. Kenny Leseur for recently winning the Moon-gate Tour, the golf championship, I think it was last weekend . . . or, no, about two weeks ago. I would refer to him as up and coming, Mr. Speaker. But I do not think that is correct because I think he has basically arrived. And I wish this young gentleman continued success in his golfing.

Now, I have a bit of a nautical theme coming up here, Mr. Speaker. So, first of all, as you know, last time we were here I wished, in advance, success for all the Newport racers. And now I welcome them all to Bermuda. They all got here safe and sound. And I particularly congratulate the boat *Black Jack 100*, it's a 100-footer who did the race and took line honours. Can you believe this, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Record time.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: From Newport to . . . well, not quite. I am going to get to that.

The Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Newport to Bermuda, one day, 11 hours and 26 minutes. Can you believe that?

The Speaker: Yes. Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And they were 48 minutes short of the record. So, anyone who is here, you know, who has a chance to go down to the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club, I urge you go check out all those boats, especially this boat which they parked in the pole position. Really, really something to see. A real machine.

Now, speaking of real machines, Mr. Speaker, I would like to associate myself with the Minister of Housing. Congratulations to the power boaters. I have been seeing videos of that online and, again, I was pretty wowed. So, I think we all should be proud of the Bermuda ingenuity and success.

And now that takes me to another motorised race. This weekend will be the Round the Island Seagull race. It is probably a little bit on the other end of the spectrum from those power boaters. And I won't get into details of the various rules and regulations, but there are some details there you should check out. So, I wish all those participants a successful and, importantly, safe race. It is quite a cultural and unique thing to Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

And my last nautical comment, Mr. Speaker, is also I want to congratulate everybody who participated in the Edward Cross long-distance comet race. Those who follow these things know there was a little bit of controversy around it, which, again, you can find out more for yourself. But I also congratulate Alan and Sarah Frith for ultimately being declared the winners of that race, and I believe it was a maiden title. So, congratulations to them particularly, but, of course, all participants in that also very unique Bermuda tradition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Would any other Member . . . MP Dill.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to my colleagues and the listening audience.

I would just like to take the time this morning to, first of all, start out by offering condolences to the Outerbridge family on the passing of Mrs. Kenlyn Smith. Kenlyn . . . she was also a member, a valued member, of the civil service who worked for, I believe, close to 40 years in the General Post Office. She was an amazing woman who was certainly a part of the fabric of that department in government and so we just want to offer our sincere condolences to her family and may she rest in peace.

I would like to also join with MP Lovita Foggo and the spokesperson for Education, MP Dennis Lister [III], in congratulating all of our students who have made . . . crossed major milestones over these past several weeks, and will in the weeks that are yet ahead of us.

I would like to offer special congratulations to the graduates from constituency 36, from Lagoon Park Preschool, Sandys Secondary Middle School, the West End Primary School, and the Somerset Primary School. I want to take a special salute to the leaders of two of those schools that have taken the social media airwaves by storm with their creativity. The students from West End Primary School under the leadership of Principal Trina Cariah, many of you will have seen the video that showed each student introducing themselves. But they had to choose a saying that guided them as they moved on to their next step. And they did an exceptional job. So, I salute those students.

I would also like to salute the creativity of the Sandys Secondary Middle School who created an arts project where each of the graduates did something where they said their name and they said *I am signing out* and they left their handprints on a piece of artwork. So, I just want to congratulate all of our students, all of our educators, all of our parents, and like MP Lovitta Foggo said, I believe that our future is in great hands and the best is yet to come.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Whip, would you like your three minutes?
Mr. Tyrrell.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like condolences to be sent to the family of Mr. Dane Brown and his wife Charlene. Mr. Brown is actually being funeralised at this moment as we speak. Dane was a neighbour of mine during my days on Angle Street and he was a very good sportsman in both cricket and football for Young Men's Social Club. And in his later years, like most of us, he transferred to a slower game, slow pitch . . .

An Hon. Member: Softball.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Softball—that's the word I want. And that is when I actually joined him. We played slow pitch softball for a number of years together, his wife as well, for a team that was called The Royal Gazette Slow Pitchers. And he was a very nice guy. As I said, we grew up—he was on Princess Street, I was on Angle Street, so we, you know, we obviously played in the streets in those days together, both football and cricket, so I do wish him, wish the family all the best and, my friend, rest in peace.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Whip.

Minister, would you like to add your comments? Minister Lightbourne, you have the floor.

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

This morning I just wanted to rise to offer congratulations to the National Museum. I had the honour of participating on behalf of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport in opening their *Your Pictures. Your Objects. Your Stories. Our History* exhibition, Mr. Speaker, and recognising that we have been conscious and also celebrating and also seeking to amplify what is our history and our stories through our ministry efforts through CARICOM.

I wanted to both highlight the work that's been going on for some time at the National Museum regarding their *Tracing Our Roots/Routes* and *The Objects That Make Us* exhibits and the efforts that they have been trying to do to connect and also shine a light on the history that is entrenched in our communities, the stories that have made us who we are and the truth of, you know, not only who we are but also our history and our roots. I do want to celebrate them under the leadership of Ms. Elena Strong.

I also wish to offer congratulations to the graduating class of Devonshire Preschool. I had a special young lady who participated in that school, and I wanted to celebrate not only that class but also the teachers who day in and day out offer a rich contribution and a rich kind of . . . and a safe space for our children to both grow and learn and develop. And so, I want to celebrate Principal Burns, Teacher William, Teacher Simmons, Teacher Bramlett, Teacher Webb and Ms. Roberts for their support and guidance for that graduating class that finished yesterday.

Finally, I want to also just offer congratulations and also a public service announcement to encourage members of the public to attend a screening on menopause which is taking place tomorrow at the Treehouse location. It's tomorrow at [4]:00 pm. Ms. Kisha Tyrrell and Dr. Cousins will be hosting a film and as women navigate mental health and also menopause and the change, I want to associate MP Tyrrell of course with these comments. But Treehouse Bermuda tomorrow, and women in particular, encouraging them to come out and just learn about the change and perimenopause and also the transition to menopause and its impact that it has as we seek to navigate and go through our community. So, I do want to encourage Members, tomorrow 4:00 pm at Treehouse.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask that this Honourable House do extend condolences to the family of the late Mr. (and I do not believe this was done before) George Eric Furbert who passed away in his 79th year. He was the husband of the late Paula Furbert and the father of Erica Smith, the executive director of the

BEDC, Thea Furbert, who we would know from her autism advocacy at Tomorrow's Voices, and Ms. Stacey Hill. I have known the family my entire life and I certainly did get to pay my last respects, but I want to ask this Honourable House to send condolences to his family.

On a different note, Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask this Honourable House to extend a letter of congratulations to the organisers of the 2026 Carnival in Bermuda which was held over the National Heroes Day holiday.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: And this all goes from the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, the Bermuda Tourism Authority, Carnival in Bermuda organisers, NOVA Mas International, Party People Entertainment and all of the organisers, artists, vendors, volunteers, promoters and staffs who helped to deliver this year's events.

Our Carnival in Bermuda brought visitors from around the world to our Island for six days of music and culture. And from family-friendly programming to concerts, fetes and of course the closing event, Revel de Road, Bermuda once again shows that we can host a visitor experience that supports tourism, showcases local talent and brings Bermudians and guests together.

I also, Mr. Speaker, would ask that the Honourable House do extend its appreciation to the Bermuda Police Service, the emergency services, the traffic teams and all those who worked across a holiday weekend to keep residents and visitors safe.

The success of Carnival in Bermuda was a result of the dedication and hard work of many people behind the scenes, and it was so great to be a part of the celebrations, to witness so many visitors enjoying Bermudian culture. And it is important to note of course that the event itself saw significant economic activity. And that economic activity ended up in persons who are entrepreneurs, persons who are promoting parties, persons who are vendors and service providers, persons inside this community who are looking for an economic boost to look forward to Carnival events on every single year. And so, I am proud that this Government continues to support it, and I would ask the Honourable House to please send a letter of congratulations to the organisers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

There are no others.

Before we move on, I would just like to add my support to the words of congratulations that were given to Ms. Alyson Thompson on her film about the riots, about how *Bermuda Riots Differently*. She won the award amongst the many other entries that was at the film festival there in the UK, so it is outstanding that

Bermuda, once again, punches above its weight, so to speak.

And secondly, to the remarks that were given to Mr. Eric Furbert's family just now. I have known the family for most of my adult life, as well . . . no, from my teenage years rather. Not adult life; teenage years. So, my condolences to the family.

With that said, we will now move on.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: It has been agreed by both sides that we will switch the order. Item No. 1 will now be the second item done and Item No. 2 will be the first item.

And Item No. 2 is the second reading of the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce in this Honourable House today the Bill entitled the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 which provides for the Chairman of the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to dismiss an appeal where the appellant has been non-responsive and has failed to pursue his appeal.

Mr. Speaker, at present the Immigration Appeals Tribunal does not have the explicit authority to dismiss appeals that have been left unresolved and effectively abandoned by appellants. In practice, this has resulted in cases remaining in abeyance for extended periods, in some instances for several years, due to the lack of communication or action from the appellant.

This situation creates administrative inefficiencies, contributes to an inaccurate representation of active caseloads and undermines the Tribunal's ability to effectively manage its proceedings.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 to expressly empower the chairman of the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to dismiss appeals that have remained unresolved and in abeyance for a period exceeding six months. The amendments also provide for the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to make rules governing the way in which the Chairman may dismiss an appeal and provide that the appellant, if aggrieved by a decision to dismiss this appeal, may appeal to the Supreme Court.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Immigration and Protection (Appeal) Amendment Rules 2026, which are subject to the negative resolution procedure, will prescribe the process by which dismissals may take place, ensuring the appellant are afforded procedural fairness and particularly, where appellants have failed to pursue their appeals and the Chairman considers the appeal should be dismissed, the appellant will be notified of the intention to dismiss their appeal and given a final opportunity to proceed.

Appellants will be given 30 days from the date of the notice to make written representations to the Chairman, giving reason as to why the appeal should not be dismissed.

If no representations are made to the Chairman within 30 days, then the Chairman shall notify the parties of the appeal in writing that it is dismissed. If written representations are made to the Chairman within the required time frame, the Chairman shall consider the representation and consult with members of the panel before deciding whether or not to dismiss the appeal. Again, parties to the appeal will be formally notified of the dismissal in writing.

Mr. Speaker, by enabling the Tribunal to resolve dormant matters, these reforms will support more accurate reporting, improve case management, and enhance public confidence in the appeals process.

These amendments are a practical and necessary step.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Fahy.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that the Minister has added some clarity around what is expected to be seen in the Rules, so thank you, Minister, for that.

There are no objections from this side of the House in respect of what is trying to be achieved here. We have heard it before. If things take too long, justice is not what it is supposed to be.

So, I do have a couple of questions that maybe the Minister can shed some light on.

Obviously, these amendments have been brought to speed up the administration of cases. How many are currently outstanding, over six months, where it is likely that the Chairman is going to make dismissal orders given the parameters that have been set? Even round numbers would be sufficient, just so we have an idea as to how many actually are outstanding that required this amendment to be brought.

And how long will it take for the Rules to be published by the Immigration Appeals Tribunal? It sounds as if they are pretty much ready to go, but in the event that this Bill will pass, and in the Senate, how much longer thereafter will those Rules be available for people to read?

That's the end of my comments. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Lister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will just take a few minutes just to lend support to this amendment. I think where common sense and housecleaning—it is something that will make it more efficient.

As the Minister said that, and I take it from my own experience, Mr. Speaker, and, you know, when you are doing internal auditing or recordkeeping and you look at a spreadsheet and you see that there are requests to appeal 60, 90, 120, 180 days outstanding, Mr. Speaker. I think this goes a long way to help clean it up, better recordkeeping for the ones that are looking at these reports, Mr. Speaker.

And again, I think it also gives provision, it looks out and gives provisions to those that might feel

aggrieved, as the Minister said, where the Tribunal or the Chair of the Tribunal has dismissed the appeal because it has been sitting for six months or so. If a person feels aggrieved, that they can appeal to have that . . . to appeal that dismissal.

So again, sensible housecleaning to make it more efficient, and again, it is good to hear that the Opposition is in favour of this, again, common sense legislation being brought to this House.

So, thank you again, Mr. Speaker, and to the Minister and his team for this amendment.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none. Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, the procedures are being worked on simultaneously as we go through this particular process, so it will be timely that we bring those procedures to the House of Assembly.

When we look at the number of appeals that are actually published in the Budget Book as an outcome, we are talking about less than five appeals, which are standing over the . . . I believe you asked for a six-month period? Yes.

Mr. Speaker, I do thank the Opposition and the Member from this side who have contributed to this debate. I believe they summed it up well as it pertains to these commonsense Rules that straighten up procedures that are required.

So, I now move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Deputy Speaker.

House in Committee at 12:17 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members.

We are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, can I move clauses 1 through 4?

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none. Continue, Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Act 1956 to provide for the Chairman of the Immigration Appeals Tribunal to dismiss an appeal where the appellant has failed, for a period of six months, to pursue his appeal; for Rules to be made as to the manner in which appeals may be dismissed, and for persons aggrieved by such a decision to appeal to the Supreme Court.

Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 amends section 13E, Powers and Procedure, by providing for the Chairman of the Immigration Appeal Tribunal to dismiss an appeal where the applicant has failed to pursue his appeal for a period of six months.

Clause 3 amends section 13F[(2)], Costs and Rules, by providing for the Immigration Appeal Tribunal to make Rules as to the manner in which the Chairman may dismiss an appeal.

Clause 4 amends section 13G, Right to appeal decision to the Supreme Court, to provide for persons who are aggrieved by a decision of the Chairman to dismiss their appeal to make an appeal to the Supreme Court.

The Chairman: Thank you.

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

There are no other Members.

Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

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

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Approved.

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

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.
So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the Whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 12:20 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Thank you, Members. Are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has been reported as printed.

The next item on the Order Paper is the second reading of the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Finance and Premier.

Would you like to present this matter now?

[Pause]

The Speaker: For the listening audience, the Premier is just preparing for his presentation.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Mr. Speaker, it seems as if my technology is not working.

An Hon. Member: It's not yours.

Hon. E. David Burt: I know. Right?

The Speaker: It's perfect when it works.

Hon. E. David Burt: Imagine that.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I am going to hopefully wait for it to wake up. Or I might have to read it off of my phone, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, could you bear with me for one minute, please? I am so sorry. I will try to open the file again.

The Speaker: For the listening, audience, we just completed the first Order of the Day, which was the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act. And we are now about to do the second Order of Business today, which is the Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026. And we are just waiting for a technical matter to be resolved here.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My sincere apologies.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

BILL

SECOND READING

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House today has a clear purpose. It delivers the 10 per cent pension increase for public sector retirees that we spoke of in the Budget Statement earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members would be aware that public service pension benefits have been frozen since 2014. And that freeze has been raised with me by retirees, by unions, and in many different forums over the past years. These are former teachers, nurses, police officers, firefighters, corrections officers, administrative officers, and many other public officers who worked across government and, of course, gave years of service to this country. Retirees have seen their costs go up. They have served Bermuda, and they have done their part, and they have waited a long time for this increase.

However, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that there was a reason why public service pensions were frozen in 2014, as it is well accepted that the Public Service Superannuation Fund was not in a sustainable position and action needed to be taken. And it would be part of the record of this House as one of my things as Shadow Minister of Finance, that the officers at the time supported that freeze, recognising that work needed to be done on public sector pensions.

But the important thing, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government actually did that work. And so, it is important that we approach these things in the right order. It would not have been responsible to respond to the pleas of those who wanted a public sector pension increase to simply promise or to give an increase without first doing the work that was required to strengthen the Public Service Superannuation Fund. Mr. Speaker, that

is why this House passed the Public Service Superannuation (PSSF Stabilisation) Amendment Act 2025, and that legislation put our fund, or put the public sector pension fund on a sustainable path.

At that time, we made it clear that stabilising the fund was the first step. It created the capacity for the Government to responsibly consider pension increases during this fiscal year after consultation with the actuaries and the Public Service Superannuation Board.

It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that if those increases were not suspended in 2014, we would have had a fund that would have been in an even worse position. And by the time we would have made those changes, it was likely, Mr. Speaker, that the fund would not have been able to pay benefits.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have gone through this process. We have gone through the changes to the fund and, following consultation with the actuaries and the Public Service Superannuation Board, which is made up of the unions, the represented unions, Mr. Speaker, the Government is now able to move forward with this 10 per cent increase. We did say that we would stabilise the fund, and we said once that work was done, we would provide relief to public sector retirees, and now we are delivering.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House amends the Pensions Increase Act 1972 to provide a 10 per cent increase in pensions payable under the Public Service Superannuation Act 1981, and any Act repealed under that Act, because there were a number of Acts that were a precedent to that as well, and persons are still receiving pensions under those previous Acts.

The Bill also applies to pensions under the Ministers and Members of the Legislature (Salaries and Pensions) Act 1975, consistent with recommendations made by the Committee which reviewed Ministers and Members of the Legislature's salaries and pensions underneath the particular Act.

Mr. Speaker, it has been mentioned in the Budget Statement and otherwise that this increase will take effect from the 1 April 2026. However, it is also important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the payments on this are not going to begin until October 2026, and therefore when the payments, or the increase in payments, go in October 2026, they will be inclusive of the retroactive amounts due from the 1 April 2026.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, the change of which we are making is not a return to the automatic annual cost of living increases that did exist underneath the previous Act, or the Act of which we are amending.

The Government must continue to manage the fund responsibly, and we must continue to protect its long-term sustainability, and Honourable Members will know that the changes of which we made require a consultation both on matters related to increases and also matters that are related to any types of changes with the Public Service Superannuation Board. However,

we are now in a position to provide this promised 10 per cent increase, and we are doing so.

Mr. Speaker, some will say that this 10 per cent is not enough. And I understand that after so many years without an increase, people would want more. But this is what we can responsibly afford at this time while protecting the fund for the long term. However, this is a real increase that is being delivered after the Government did the work to place the fund on a stable footing.

But, Mr. Speaker, it is also important to note that this Bill also sits alongside wider work this Government has done to support seniors and retirees. Since returning to office in 2017, this Government has increased social insurance pensions in line with inflation. As we know, and I tabled earlier today, Mr. Speaker, an Order to continue that promise. We have also expanded health benefits that matter to retirees. HIP and FutureCare policyholders now benefit from annual physicals without copays, and the Government has also expanded GEHI benefits so that public sector retirees covered by GEHI—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Public sector retirees covered by GEHI will benefit from improved access to annual examinations without the previous out-of-pocket costs.

Supporting retirees is not only about pension income, it is also about reducing the cost of care, improving access to preventative health services, and helping people manage their health before small issues become more serious and more expensive.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has taken the hard decision required to strengthen the fund, and because of that work, we can now deliver this 10 per cent increase in pension benefits to our public sector retirees.

I look forward to the comments of other Members. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: We have got two minutes before 12:30.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Take comments now . . . or . . . at least take it to Committee.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I can certainly do it in under seven minutes, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: But not under two.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Maybe not under two.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: I was going to suggest . . . are there many speakers?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay, well let's do the recess.
MP Simmons.

Mr. Scott Simmons: No, I am not inclined to interrupt, Honourable Speaker.

It is just that I am wondering why we are not going all the way through. Are there other obligations that prevent us from going through? This appears to be a very short session today. We could have omitted lunch and gone straight through. But if we are prepared now to take lunch and then return afterwards, only to be here briefly thereafter.

Thank you, Honourable Speaker.

The Speaker: You can see the negotiation going back, or conversation going back and forth. We were trying to establish where we could have gone straight through, but there seem to be commitments that have been made that do not allow the leading spokesman to be here for that entire time.

So, the negotiation, you have seen the Whips and I going back and forth. We are trying to work that out now.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Thank you for your—

The Speaker: We were hoping to have sat right through—

Mr. Scott Simmons: Thank you for your reply, sir.

The Speaker: —but the Premier has a meeting during this period of time that was already pre-scheduled.

So, we will move for lunch now.

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

I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn to return at 2:00 pm.

The Speaker: Okay. So, the House will now stand adjourned until 2:00 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:30 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:01 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. I trust everyone had a nice lunch.

We are about to start the afternoon session. The House is now in session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Before we pick up where we left off and where we were this morning on the second item for today, the Premier, as the lead Minister, had presented it, and the Opposition Shadow Finance Minister was about to reply. Before I do that, I'd just like to acknowledge the visitors in our Gallery.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: You may have seen earlier this week in the newspaper where the headline read that Belize beat Brazil in the World Cup.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Everybody hear the response of everybody?

The headlines don't always predict what the real story is. The real story was, yes, Belize beat Brazil in the World Cup *in cricket*.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Hearing the [word] "cricket," everybody . . . see the reaction of everybody?

The cricket tournament is taking place here in Bermuda right now. Part of the delegation that's here supporting Belize [includes] the former high commissioner who served for Belize in England and Guatemala. She's here visiting with her daughter and her son-in-law because their son is actually playing for the team.

We trust that besides watching cricket while you are here you get out and enjoy our Island. I'm sure you will enjoy what Bermuda has to offer in its hospitality and the kindness and niceness of our people.

Welcome to the Parliament.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Now, I know you have come to relax, so you don't have to sit here too long with us. But we just want to acknowledge that you are in the country. I can't say I wish your team wins because we want Bermuda to win, but I wish your team does well.

With that, let us move on.

Shadow Minister, would you like to make your presentation?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you very much Mr. Speaker. Good afternoon to you.

The Speaker: Sorry. Sorry, I didn't mention your name. The high commissioner is Kamela . . . Pam . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Palma. That's right. Thank you. Okay. Go right ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and of course, welcome to our guests.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

BILL

SECOND READING

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

[Continuation thereof]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you to the Honourable Premier and Finance Minister for his presentation on the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act [2026].

He alluded to the delicate balance in managing these pensions funds, and we, certainly in the Opposition, appreciate that balance between reforming these funds, making sure they are fully funded and can work appropriately for the beneficiaries, but also providing the level of benefits that are required. So, certainly, I would say conceptually we support this approach.

I have a couple of questions that I know the Premier will be able to answer for us, because when we look around, we know that health insurance costs are up for everybody. And that's one reason why people need these higher pension payouts. The cost of living in general is up.

As you know Mr. Speaker, the One Bermuda Alliance called for a long time for the reform in the public sector pension funds and so, of course, we did support it when it came. Similarly, Mr. Speaker, as a reminder to the listening public, what we are talking about today is what is called the PSSF (Public Sector Superannuation Fund), and it's for the government employees. There is also social insurance, or the Contributory Pension Fund. We in the One Bermuda Alliance are patiently waiting to hear more from the Government about the plans for reforming that, which is more applicable to the general population, not to take away from our support and principle of this Bill before us today but to provide that contextual information.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, probably the one concern that we have . . . and I know that the Premier talked about how these increases were reviewed by the various advisory boards and the actuaries. And I know when we did the original reform he talked about that, if the reform worked out, there should be enough headroom in the funds to support a future increase, which is what we are seeing here. I still am concerned because we are not privy to the details of the analysis. And, Mr. Speaker, one thing we know is the population is declining, the working population is declining, the demo-

graphic trend is not in our favour, and it's not in the favour of these funds. We have heard recently that perhaps up to a third of the civil service could be retiring in a very short period of time. And you can imagine what that is going to do to the balance of these funds to fund the public servants' pensions.

So, I think one question that we have for the Premier is: What can he tell us about what options were considered to ensure that the headroom remains for the safety of these pension funds for all of the recipients over the long term?

I know he alluded to this as a one-time increase. So, of course, they must feel that they have covered the bases on that. But perhaps maybe 5 per cent this year and 5 per cent next year might have been a more prudent approach to take. Especially, like I said, we have heard that there could be a lot of retirements coming up and a real change in the balance of the recipients of the fund.

And I think my other question, Mr. Speaker, is: He noted that the payments won't be made until October, retroactive until April. And I'm sure we would all appreciate an explanation as to why that delay of, I guess that would be six months, Mr. Speaker. I think I know, but I'd rather hear directly from the Premier.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, like I said, we do indicate our general support of this to support people with the rising health costs, rising cost of living. But we do have some concerns about the future stability of the funds. We think it's a very dynamic situation with the demographic balance.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

MP Swan?

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

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Premier and Finance Minister for bringing these measures.

I declare my interest. I am a pensioner. I'm not a retiree yet, but I know I can speak very confidently on behalf of those former colleagues of mine who would have served in the civil service, who may have started when I first came back to Bermuda in 1980 and 1983 and 1984, and the like, to join. And some of them have been there, retired. Some of them were very senior to me. And to think that 12 years without . . . 12 years and now we're seeing this increase.

I know while there are some that want it to be more, and understandably, because the price of cheese doesn't stay where it was back pre-COVID-19. It moves up. And it's very difficult for persons to make

ends meet. Many seniors are making choices between medication and food, so the increase is welcomed.

And I would say anything that could work towards making sure that it's done in alignment with the cost of living would be welcomed, I'm sure. We will look to make sure, because we are the Government that has made sure, with regard to social insurance, that that is tied to cost of living. Unlike the Shadow Minister's party that when in power actually didn't do that, and so we had to play catch-up.

And not to make light of catch-up, but some folks, because of that, had just ketchup on sandwiches. We need more than ketchup on our sandwiches. We need a little bit more subs than meat. So, thank you, Mr. Premier, for providing some support for seniors and those who have served this country ever so well.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

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

None other?

Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, Minister Furbert.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we should be proud—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —of this Bill that is coming to the House today. We all should be proud because we know someone in our lives who would have worked as a public servant, who would benefit from the superannuation 10 per cent increase.

I remember, Mr. Speaker, a senior coming to me. They had stopped me on the street, and they said, *You know, you guys are making changes to the social insurance pension benefits, and you're giving yearly increases that way. What about us?* And, you know, I thought about it. I know the team was working on something. We knew that we, as a Government, wanted to stabilise the fund before we can actually offer an increase, Mr. Speaker. And while a 10 per cent increase may not seem like much for some, it is definitely the responsible thing to do, Mr. Speaker. Because on one hand we could give zero. We could give absolutely nothing. We could give zero of an increase. But knowing what is available to us in the fund, the team has taken a good deep dive and looked at this to see what we can responsibly offer to our persons over the age of 65 who benefit from the superannuation.

And so, again, Mr. Speaker, I'm just standing on my feet to let the country know that I support this Bill. We all should be proud about this Bill and the contributions that will now be given to persons over the age of 65. We are a Government who listens—particularly thinking again about the seniors who have come forward to [ask] *What about us?*—with [regard to] the in-

creases we have been [making] in the social insurance pension.

And now today, we can proudly say, this is where we are today, and this is what we are able to offer our seniors who benefit from the superannuation benefit. With that said, Mr. Speaker, again, a promise made, a promise kept.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Minister Adams, would you like to make a contribution?

Go right ahead.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, that's right.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: That's right.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my support for this Bill and to thank the Premier for bringing this forward. At first glance, this Bill appears to be relatively straightforward. It's an increase, a 10 per cent increase in pensions for retired public officers and Members of the legislature. Very important stuff.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at it, I think it's more important than that. I think the Minister who spoke before me hit the nail on the head, because it represents a promise kept. It represents a responsible Government. And I can certainly say it represents the values of the PLP.

Mr. Speaker, when I think about this Bill, I think about the retired teacher who spent decades in the classroom shaping the minds of our children. I think about the firefighter and the prison officer who often missed out on nights, weekends, and holidays because they felt a sense of duty. I think about the firefighter who would often get calls [in] the middle of the night to address or put themselves in harm's way to simply make a complete stranger safe. And you see, I don't believe any of those individuals entered the public service expecting to be wealthy. They serve because they believe in something bigger than themselves. In fact, they still believe in something bigger than themselves. And so, in return, this Government then says that they deserve more than our thanks. They deserve dignity and a sense of security. They deserve a Government that honours its commitment. And so, that is why, again, I am proud to be PLP.

Mr. Speaker, what makes today's debate particularly meaningful is that this increase has not come by happenstance or by accident, but rather because this Government had the courage to do the difficult work first. So, last year in this Honourable House, we debated significant reforms to the PSSF. Those re-

forms were not easy. They required leadership, difficult conversations, very difficult conversations. But they were necessary conversations because we recognised that the PSSF was on an unsustainable path. But instead of ignoring those problems or kicking the can down the road (as they say) this Government, under this Minister of Finance, acted. We stabilised the PSSF. We put it on a path of longer-term sustainability.

And so, Mr. Speaker, today, we are simply delivering on a commitment that we made to the people. And so, I say with a sense of pride, because responsible governing is not simply about making promises, it's about putting yourself in a position to keep them.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, it's important we understand that balancing the books is not the destination, but rather it allows us to do more for our people. And so, today, as a Government, we are proud to be discussing a Bill that will improve the lives of the very people who spent decades improving ours.

And so, yes, this Bill looks to increase pensions by 10 per cent. But I believe it delivers even more. It delivers reassurance. It tells our retirees that this country has not forgotten about them. It tells today's public servants . . . In fact, I saw some [public servants] on my way here. And I told them that I was talking about something that will impact them in the future. That their service will continue to be valued.

And it demonstrates that when this Government says it will take difficult decisions today in order to deliver outcomes tomorrow, those are not empty words. They are promises that we intend to keep. So that is why I am proud to support this Bill. That is why I am proud to stand with this Government. And that is why I am proud to be PLP.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

None?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is remarkable how the Opposition gets so exercised when people support good legislation.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, I'm happy . . . oh, yes, absolutely. I'm so happy that, you know, they are over there making their snide comments.

But the reality is that the 3,700 public officers who are getting a pension increase, which has been frozen since they were in Government, would know and

recognise the hard work that is being done. And so whatever noises or prescriptions they may wish to make, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that it is this Government that is delivering a public sector pension increase. It is this Government that has delivered consecutive increases in social insurance for the seniors of this country.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is this Government that has delivered no co-pays for annual examinations for the seniors and those persons who are on here.

Oh, they keep on making noise, Mr. Speaker. The more noise they make, I'm going to remind them of our record. They don't want to listen.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: No, they don't want to listen, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Well, you talk to the Chairman.

Hon. E. David Burt: Don't worry. I got you.

So, Mr. Speaker, there were a few questions.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to make sure that the Honourable Opposition Whip knows I don't take my marching orders from him.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I will continue to make sure that I speak as to the record of this Government, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: It seems as though some persons want to forget. And the contributions from Members on this side have sent a clear picture that we are actually delivering on the promises of which we have made.

So, we can, you know, reflect back earlier in this session where there were questions about the priorities of Government and whether or not Government can do more than one thing at one time. I think that we are demonstrating that we can, Mr. Speaker. And in making sure that we repaired the pension fund and put it on a sustainable footing going forward, something that has been long spoken about but delivered underneath this particular Government through long and painstaking negotiations with unions and others, it enables us to come to this point.

It enables a \$2 billion liability to [be] remove[d] from our balance sheet because of the fact that we have made these changes. It enables rating agencies

to upgrade our ratings and to look at us and say [that we are] actually making the broader macro reforms that have been promised for so long, but that are actually now being delivered. So, Mr. Speaker, it is important that the people in this Chamber, the Members, Honourable Members of this Chamber, and the people of this country recognise that we are able to deliver this 10 per cent pension increase to 3,700 public sector pensioners because of the fact that we have been sound stewards of the public purse. That is the reason why.

So, there [were] a few questions that came up, Mr. Speaker. One of the questions that came up was why not do 5 per cent and 5 per cent? Well, I mean, that's his opinion. We decided to go with 10 [per cent]. The law requires us to consult with the Public Service Superannuation Board, and we do it from the perspective of the long-term health of the fund. And so, we have a policy prescription that over the 40-year time horizon of the fund we want it to be at least at a 90 per cent funded ratio. And so, from that particular perspective, that's where we find ourselves in this.

And so, I hope that Members of, you know, public officers listening, saying that if they were in Government, they would not get 10 per cent. But when we're in Government, we will give them the 10 per cent of which they deserve.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House. That's not what we said. That is exactly not—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I asked a question. I asked how they considered it. I asked how they set it. I didn't say what we would or wouldn't do. We don't have all that information. And that was the information I was soliciting. So, I would invite the Premier to retract that incorrect statement. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier, the Member is saying that the statement was incorrect. I—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will not retract the statement because I firmly heard that Honourable Member say, *Did they consider 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent]*. So, I'm going to make my own imputation —

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait.

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He said . . . *they said we would do 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent] and not do the 10 [per cent]*. And that is absolutely not what was said, Mr. Speaker. And that is important for the record.

And I am very upset that the Premier continues to misrepresent my comments about the health and safety of our public servants. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member is insisting that he did not say 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent].

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member certainly said 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent]. I heard it. The public heard it.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of—

Hon. E. David Burt: Even he admitted it.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is intentionally misleading, because I asked if they *considered*. I didn't say what we would or wouldn't do. I asked what he considered and the information that led to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: So, you're saying that you asked if they considered half and half? Or, you didn't say 50-50.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I asked if they considered an option like that, and how they arrived at that conclusion.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I did not say, Mr. Speaker, the OBA would only do 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent]. The Premier is putting words in my mouth that were not said.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, my clarification here is whether you said the Opposition would do 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent], or did you throw 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent] out as a suggestion? Because the Members are saying that they heard 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent].

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: A question; if they considered.

The Speaker: Okay. That's all I needed.

So, Mr. Premier, he's saying that they did not say 5 [per cent] and 5 [per cent] is what they would do. They threw it as an example of something that could have been considered.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, thank you so much. I appreciate your guidance.

So, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm trying to clarify so it doesn't go back and forth.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, the only person going back and forth is that Honourable Member. Because in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, if he were in the chair, then he would not have given the same increase that this Government has given. That is my opinion.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: That's imputing improper motive, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Let's . . . let's . . . let's put this to rest.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Let's put this to rest. Here's how we put this to rest.

What the Premier just said, that if someone else was in the chair, they could have given a different amount. That's basically what he said. He said you may have decided to give 12 per cent or 14 per cent. He just said you wouldn't have done his amount.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: That's all. He didn't say less or no. He just said you would have done a different amount. So, I am trying to get us from jumping up and down now.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to me, never ending—

The Speaker: Well, we can . . . we can move forward.

Hon. E. David Burt: I've got you.

The Speaker: We can move forward.

Hon. E. David Burt: —that the Shadow Minister of Finance—

The Speaker: We can move forward.

Hon. E. David Burt: That the Shadow Minister of Finance can dish but cannot take.

The Speaker: No, no, just . . . just—

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm with you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —just move forward. Let's move forward.

Hon. E. David Burt: This is debating. This is what we do in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker. It is a historical device that flourishes. The Honourable Member said: *Have they considered . . . did you consider X, Y, and Z?* I've told the Honourable Member what we actually decided on and the basis of which we decided on. And in my opinion, they may have done something else.

And it is perfectly in keeping with their record, Mr. Speaker. Let us remember what they did when they were in Government where they made seniors wait five years for a pension increase and told them money doesn't grow on trees.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

Hon. E. David Burt: So, that is a historical basis. It fits into their governing philosophy. And today we heard whether or not—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —whether or not we want to make it less.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What's your—

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is referring to the . . . the Premier is misleading the House because he's referring to the OBA's governance philosophy. Our philosophy is fiscal responsibility for social responsibility and striking an appropriate balance.

And as an example of that, Mr. Speaker, is when the OBA came into Government there was no money to pay the civil servants. And they had to take a loan to do that. That was the legacy that they picked up. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Mr. Speaker, but they also found \$100 million for a boat race. So, let's . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, we understand the priorities, Mr. Speaker. And every single time that the Honourable Member tries to rewrite history, we on this side will remind him. Because the One Bermuda Alliance did make pensioners in this country wait for five years before a pension increase. They did, Mr. Speaker, say that money does not grow on trees.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: And now today we heard the suggestions that maybe it would not be as big as the one of which we've giving. So, the public officers who are listening, the retirees who are listening, everyone knows and understands the difference between the philosophy of this Government versus that Government, Mr. Speaker.

And here's the point: We—we—are delivering.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: As you would have heard, the reason why we do the work to put the public books in order is to make sure that we can deliver this. The reason why we do the work to ensure that we get ratings upgrades and changes to our pension system to remove unfunded liabilities is so that we can give pension increases to our retirees, Mr. Speaker. That is where we are. That is what we are doing today, Mr. Speaker.

So, I'm grateful that Members opposite are in somewhat support of this. But I'm happy to know that the public officers listening remember, recognise, and understand which Government is on their side. And it absolutely helps . . . which party is on their side. Because it actually helps, Mr. Speaker.

Because there was a second question that had [asked]: Can you explain the delay in the payout? Actually, I can explain the delay in the payout, Mr. Speaker. And the reason why there is a delay in the payout is because we have a Compensation and Benefits Unit that does have limited staff. And in the months of April, May, June, July, August, and September, Mr. Speaker, they are processing increases to public officer salaries as a result of the agreement that we made with the unions.

Some Hon. Members: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: So, not only are we increasing the salaries for public officers currently today, but we are also increasing the pension benefits for the retired public officers.

And so, as Members said, whether those are police officers, or former nurses, or former teachers, or former prison officers, hard-working public servants, even the retired Clerk to the Legislature who was here before, today, Mr. Speaker, [they] will all benefit from this Government's due diligence and work to make sure

we balance the books and deliver this pension increase today.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I believe I've answered all the questions, and I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Deputy Speaker, would you like to assume the Chair?

House in Committee at 2:28 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill—I can't hear myself—on the Bill entitled [Pensions \(Increase\) Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister and . . . Finance Minister and Premier. Sorry.

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

Madam Chairman, I move that the House take under consideration clause 1.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clause 1.

Are there any objections for that?
There are no objections.
Continue.

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

Clause 1 is pretty simple. It provides the citation of the Act, and the Act may be cited as the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026. And I sincerely doubt there would be any objection on that, so I move that clause 1 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 1 be approved.

Are there any objections?
There are none; so moved.
Continue.

[Motion carried: Clause 1 passed.]

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

I move that clause 2 . . . as you'd be aware, [amendments] were submitted to the Clerk of the Legislature early this morning—

The Chairman: Yes, and I left them—

Hon. E. David Burt: —to show the Opposition that there are amendments. So, I'll read through clause 2, if I may.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Do you need another copy?

The Chairman: Yes. Yes, I do. I left it on my desk. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Continue, Premier.

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

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Clause 2 repeals and replaces section 2 of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1972. Clause 2 is the main clause of the Bill. It repeals and replaces section 2 of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1972. The new section does provide for a 10 per cent increase in pensions payable under the Public Service Superannuation Act 1981, including any Act repealed by that Act, and under the Ministers and Members of the Legislature (Salaries and Pensions) Act 1975.

As you will note, Madam Chairman, there is an amendment, and can I move the amendment at this time?

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider the amendment at this time.

Are there any objections?
There are none.
Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

The Chairman: Yes.

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

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 2

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, I move that clause 2 be amended in the proposed new section 2(1) (of the Pensions (Increase) Act 1972) by deleting the words "to 31 March 2027."

That's the quote as written there. And the purpose of this amendment is to make clear that the 10 per

cent pension increase is effective from the 1st of April 2026 and is not limited to the period ending the 31st of March 2027.

As amended, the relevant part of the proposed new section 2(1) would provide that the rate of pension “shall, with effect from the 1st of April 2026 be increased by 10 per cent.”

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this [amendment]?

There are none.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Yes, please.

[Crosstalk]

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

I move that the amendment be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Amendment to clause 2 passed.]

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

Just to go on, clause 2 also makes clear that the increase does not apply to ex gratia payments made under the Ex Gratia Payments Act.

And that I move that clause 2, as amended, be approved and stand part of the Bill.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 2, as amended, be approved and stand as part of the Bill.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clause 2 passed as amended.]

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

Madam Chairman, I move that we take under consideration clause 3.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clause 3 of this Bill.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue.

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

Clause 3, repeals section 3 of the Pensions (Increase) Amendment and Suspension Act 2014. This is

necessary to allow the new section 2 of the principal Act (as amended by this Bill) to operate.

The Chairman: Okay. Are you done?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clause 3?

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
I move that clause 3 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clause 3 be approved.

[Are there] any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clause 3 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: I was about to tease you and say I need to give you some red. That light blue is overpowering. But it's okay.

The Chairman: No, thank you.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: I'm very happy.

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

Madam Chairman, I now will ask that the preamble be approved, but I do have an amendment to the preamble, if I may.

The Chairman: Yes. It has been moved that we consider the amendment to the preamble.

Are there any objections?

[No audible response.]

The Chairman: Okay.

AMENDMENT TO PREAMBLE

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I now move that the preamble be amended by deleting the words “one time” and deleting the words “to 31 March 2027”. And the purpose of this amendment is to align the preamble with the amendment made to clause 2. And it makes clear that the Bill provides a 10 per cent increase effective from the 1st of April 2026. And the increase is not being described as a one-time increase or an increase limited to the period ending the 31st of March 2027.

The Chairman: Does anybody wish to speak to the amendment to the preamble?

There being no persons who wish to speak to it . . . Minister, I mean, Premier. Yes.

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

I move that the amendment to the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved. Passed.

[Motion carried: The amendment to the preamble passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I move that the preamble as amended be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam—

The Chairman: So moved and approved.

[Motion carried: The preamble passed as amended.]

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

I move that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the Whole House and passed as amended.]

House resumed at 2:34 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as amended?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as amended.

Members, I believe that brings us to the last item, or that was the last item, rather, that was going to be done on the Order Paper for today.

So, the third readings can be done at this time.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a third time by its title only?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue, Minister.

BILL

THIRD READING

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

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

Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Premier.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read by its title only?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

I move that the Bill entitled the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only and passed.

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

Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier, you have another matter in front of you at the moment.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 14

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 14 be suspended to enable me to introduce a Bill to the House.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to suspending [Standing Order 14] to allow an additional Bill being tabled today?

None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 14 suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue.

BILL

FIRST READING

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading [in order for it] to be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting. The Bill is entitled the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

There are no other matters, other than to take us to the next piece that closes us out.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, July 10, 2026.

The Speaker: Yes, correct.

Are there any objections to that?

Or [would] anyone like . . . Oh, would you like to speak to it?

MP Richardson, you have the floor. You would like to speak on motion to adjourn.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon to you and my colleagues in the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to, yet again, speak to the ongoing tragedy that is happening on our roads relating to road safety, most especially the continued fatalities and injuries that are taking place, and the abhorrent conduct. Now, whilst this Government might not be responsible for every reckless act on the roads, it is responsible for the system meant to prevent, detect, deter and punish every reckless act on the road. And in that regard, it is failing spectacularly, Mr. Speaker.

One of the areas that we have seen getting worse and worse . . . or rather, Mr. Speaker, the public has seen the matters getting worse and worse, so much so that we have now seen *The Royal Gazette* editorial to the same effect on 17 June, wherein they had commented that nine road deaths had happened in 2026 so far. That same editorial pointed out that Bermuda was now on track for 18 fatalities this year, the highest in half a century.

In the last two to three weeks, we've seen serious road crashes in Dockyard, Warwick, Sandys, and Warwick again. So, the issue is no longer one of education. It is no longer one of awareness. It is now about delivery, Mr. Speaker.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the Government owns the roads and maintains the roads. All of the enforcement tools are in the care and custody of the Government. The ticketing reform system is in the care and custody of the Government, as is court processing, coroner reform, the issue of public statistics, and the delivery on all of these reforms that are aimed and will stop the current tragedies that are happening on our roads right now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have to speak to this because this is an ongoing and serious matter where people are dying and being severely injured. A great point to this, Mr. Speaker (because it is a problem that has been oc-

curing year on year and is only getting worse), is the Government's own Bermuda Digest of Statistics 2025. It reported that road traffic accidents increased by 32 per cent in 2024. I'll repeat that, Mr. Speaker. They increased by 32 per cent.

The Digest reported that there were 1,459 reported accidents and 788 road casualties in 2024, including 127 serious casualties. The Digest recorded seven road fatalities in 2024, and six of those involved motorcycles. *The Royal Gazette* editorial, to which I referred, said that all 2026 road deaths so far were on motorcycles, as riders and pillion passengers.

Mr. Speaker, one of the grimmest duties of a police officer is attending a road traffic collision, most especially when there are multiple parties who have been injured. One of the things that they train you for at the Bermuda Police Service Training School is that you have to go look around the scene for casualties, because as the two vehicles, three, [or] four vehicles collide, bodies typically get thrown. I will spare us the gross details of the state of those bodies when a constable discovers them, or the EMT or firefighter, whoever is first on scene, as we call first responders.

But one of the things that I would refer to this or inform this Honourable House, one part of that training, and it's a key part, is that when you conduct your wider search of that area, Mr. Speaker, one of the horrors you experience is you will often find the bodies not only just near the scene, but often over walls and in water. Because the violence of the accident means that the pillion passengers, typically pillion passengers on motorcycles get thrown and catapulted quite a long way. As you can imagine, this causes incredible injuries, and that has to be dealt with at the scene.

We have to sustain these people until we can get them to the hospital. But I can tell you right now that even those, we could say even the first responder ranks will never be the same after those accidents. People are dying and being seriously injured on our roads, and that is something the Government can take action about.

Mr. Speaker, this is a public health and a family cost. The Government's own public health impact statement says KEMH recorded more than 3,760 emergency room visits from road collisions between January 2023 and December 2025. That is more than 100 people every month attending the emergency department for road traffic accidents. Mr. Speaker, nearly 10 per cent of all of those are admitted. We already have a bed crisis. So we are well aware that we need more beds in our hospital. But 10 of those beds every month are being taken by those who are admitted due to road traffic accidents. Mr. Speaker, this includes not just the people who are committing the offences that lead to the road traffic accidents. These most especially include the victims of that reckless behaviour.

The average stay for these collision patients is seven days. Nearly 44 per cent of persons at these road traffic accidents require ambulance, and more

than 93 of those were Bermuda residents. Mr. Speaker, this indicates the knock-on crisis of the road traffic situation that we have most especially impacting our cost of health care and our cost of living. Areas that are extremely sensitive, as it is right now, and making our situation vastly worse is the road traffic situation in Bermuda. Mr. Speaker, road behaviour is out of control. The Government's Road Safety Week 2026 statements at BPS, or the Bermuda Police Service, issued 1,439 speeding tickets for over 59 kilometres per hour from January 2025 to the date of this statement.

That same statement records 204 DUI [Driving Under the Influence] arrests and 33 impaired care or control arrests. Mr. Speaker, although those are recorded legally for two separate criminal offences, they are fundamentally the same thing, which means that nearly 250 drunk driving or impaired driving arrests took place.

The Royal Gazette reported on 24 June that the BPS warned about e-bike excessive speeds and dangerous driving. Mr. Speaker, I find such a statement to be as absurd as it is ridiculous. Mr. Speaker, of course e-bike excessive speeds and dangerous driving are taking place. Of course they are subject to the Road Traffic Act 1947. Of course, the Bermuda Police Service should be doing something about it. I'm not sure what's happening in our country where we have to send out press releases to tell people that there are laws and that the police will enforce them. The public see signs of this behaviour absolutely everywhere. Speeding, third lane, dangerous overtaking, ignored signs, and impaired driving.

My colleagues in the One Bermuda Alliance who have gotten in a vehicle with me—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, point of order, if I may.

The Speaker: Point of order?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, I think.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Unintentionally, I think the Honourable Member from the other side is misleading the House. Because as I sit here and listen to his points, while I know his intentions are well placed, at one point, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member says that nothing is being done. And then, Mr. Speaker, he goes on to criticise what is being done. You can't have it both ways, Mr. Speaker.

As I said before, we have taken multiple approaches to this. And it's not going to change overnight. So, I think that the Honourable Member, while his intentions are good, may be misleading the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.
Member.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, in the Hansard of 15 May [2026], I raised the paper ticketing problem . . . [the] tickets that officer's issue are very, very complicated. Right now, they're being . . . they use a sort of . . . I forget the name of the paper, the carbon paper. And when you issue a ticket, you have to issue one whole fact pattern. And then, when you issue a new offence, you have to issue the whole fact pattern over again, which means that it takes hours and hours and hours to issue tickets, most especially when you return to the station, because those have to be "hand-put" into the system. That takes you off of your patrol for hours, Mr. Speaker.

So, the very fact that you have actually finally detected and caught, and you are about to summon someone to court for a traffic offence, means that you are not patrolling. And the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, police officers are committed to all kinds of crime, road traffic being only one of them. But the fact is that they are unable to then attend to the violent crime, drug trafficking and other offences that are taking place around the Island at the same time.

Mr. Speaker, the police need modern tools for modern policing. We are able to modernise our international regulation. We are able to modernise international business. We don't seem to be able to modernise the things that are leading to the safety of our people.

The Judiciary Annual Report of 2025 says traffic cases filed fell from 4,507 in 2024 to 3,406 in 2025. That is a 24 per cent decline, Mr. Speaker. And what we're saying is no one believes that dangerous driving stopped or reduced by 24 per cent. So, what that means is that we have a problem in our system that is creating a log jam, and we're not able to identify and prosecute all of these offences. So, in other words, as the rate of accidents increases, and more and more people get hurt, we are getting less and less able to stop it.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to another problem. The consequences for all of these are just simply too slow. The Judiciary's Annual Report of 2025 identifies backlog, limited courtrooms, staffing shortages, and delay risks at Magistrates' Courts. And that same report . . . I'll move on, Mr. Speaker.

Bernews reported on 25 June that the Ministry of Justice acknowledged staffing pressures in court services and other justice-related areas. *The Royal Gazette* on 17 June reported a story where one motorist was stopped 12 times and faced a potential \$12,500 in traffic fines. At this point, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure why we are just letting it go on and on and on. I mean, a person getting stopped 12 times and having \$12,000 in fines, that feels like something serious should be happening.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, *The Royal Gazette* on 23 June reported a new traffic warrant process. Mr. Speaker, I would welcome when the Honourable Minister of National Security returns to the House . . . because as we continue our research into this matter and advocate for this Government to undertake an action plan, we have discovered troubling signs of warrants not being prosecuted, not being undertaken in a serious way. We've heard an outstanding number, or a number of outstanding warrants, at 75,000 warrants. And if that's the case, that just boggles the mind.

Mr. Speaker, the new traffic warrant process is just an indication that our processes are too burdensome and too slow. As it stands right now, we have already made recommendations on how to improve law enforcement in this way, and we'll do so again at the end of this presentation, Mr. Speaker.

Problem six of seven: We are not learning from the deaths on the road. The Judiciary Annual Report of 2025 says the Coroner's Office reviewed 137 deaths in 2025, up from 43 per cent from 2024. And of that, road fatalities rose from 4 to 10, so up some 150 per cent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the troubling part is that *The Royal Gazette* editorial of 2 September 2025 reported only four public inquests in a decade, while 981 sudden deaths were reported. So, MP Scott Pearman's point about coroner reform isn't just a good idea, it's absolutely vital, because functionally what's happening right now is that as people are dying from sudden deaths, we are not learning from why they died. In other words, we are just making the same mistake over and over again.

Mr. Speaker, absolutely no one has ownership of this whole system, given the reports that we've seen so far. Right now, there is not a consolidated plan in place. All the ministries are working, but we do not see any evidence of a joined-up approach.

As it stands right now, the Judiciary's Annual Report of 2025 says Bermuda has a significant and concerning increase in these collisions and fatalities and serious driving offences, and even recommends a formal road traffic strategy, including legislation, enforcement, infrastructure, education, data, and measurable targets. Mr. Speaker, we know this Government can put together a comprehensive plan, because they did so for the purposes of other matters around the COVID-19 crisis. And though I found several pieces of the national Economic [Development] Strategy 2023–2027] wanting, nonetheless, they did put it together, and we debated that at length.

Mr. Speaker, right now we need an answer, and it can't be one camera system, it can't be another education campaign, it can't be more condolences, and it sure as heck can't be more speeches. We need a systematic or systemic response to a systemic problem. As such, Mr. Speaker, His Majesty's Loyal Opposition puts forward seven action items for this Government to undertake, starting with publishing a 90-day Road Safety Action Plan. Like all crises, it needs a con-

solidated and unified approach with some clear directions, measurables.

As it stands right now, the responsible ministries should be named and given certain roles: National Security, Transport, Public Works, Health, Education. All the agencies: TCD, Bermuda Police Service, EMS, Road Safety Council, especially in the Attorney General's Chambers, because as it stands right now, what we are seeing is simply the roads getting worse. And we have the data for it, which means that our solutions to date are not effective.

Mr. Speaker, although the speed cameras will be rolled out as expected in September, and I'm thankful for that, now is the time to start publishing the things that will advise us before we get there. Locations; where are you going to put them? What's the safety reasons for putting them? What are the privacy rules? How do you appeal this process? How do these tickets get reported? You see, Mr. Speaker, we not only have to put down these cameras, but we have to put them where the data shows us. We have to put them where there are crashes, schools, bends, speeding, and vulnerable users. And we have to show that the penalties are commensurate with the offences, Mr. Speaker.

Action number three that this Government needs to undertake is visible policing and impairment checks. It is still absurd, Mr. Speaker, that we are telling people when we're going to stop them and where we're going to stop them for drunk driving. The fact of the matter is drunk driving is pervasive throughout our country right now, and the statistics I read earlier only prove that. We need roadside sobriety checks, and we need unannounced roadside sobriety checks. We need high [visibility] policing, not just during the holiday weekend, but intelligence-led all the time, data-led all the time.

Mr. Speaker, the modern electronic ticketing system needs to be implemented as a matter of priority. The more we have police officers running around with pencils and carbon paper just reminds us just how much we are not prepared to deal with the crisis on our roads. The ticket system should be connected to the court, to TCD. They should be issued at the side of the road. Repeat offender data should be available to police officers. The public should be able to pay online and challenge the ticket and go through a clear court process.

Mr. Speaker, the fifth of our seven solutions. Court processing reform needs to take place immediately. Routine tickets have to just be dealt with in a routine manner, and they should simply be penalised. At this point right now, it takes so much to ticket anyone that you can see why the number of tickets is going down year on year and in a commensurate fashion. The accidents and deaths and injuries on our road are going up and up, as are the hospital admissions. So, unless we get on top of this, we're simply going to price ourselves out of the very health care that we need because we can't control our roads, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, action six of seven. Going on to the coroner report and fatal collision reviews. MP Pearman called for bipartisan work on inquest law. That is absolutely vital. But what we really need right now is to learn what is triggering all these road fatalities. Because the sooner we figure that out, the sooner we can do something about it right now, Mr. Speaker. As I spoke before, the police statistics, which is publicly available, is woefully outdated. And that concerns me because I don't know how we're making our decisions about what solutions we're going to bring to ending this tragedy.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we need a monthly dashboard. The Cabinet Office has started a project, which we discussed during the last budget debate, where they're publishing more and more data online. And that is what we need to do in this case. But we're going to have to do it as it relates to road safety across the ministries. We're going to have to be able to track exactly what's happening out there. Because as it looks like right now the only thing that we can track is the amount of failure that is happening on our roads.

The simple fact is a number of hot spots have to be repaired, including road surfaces, signs, lighting, markings, bendings, junctions, and crossings. And that has to be informed by data, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that what we have right now is a crisis on our hands, a crisis that is hurting, harming, and destroying families, a crisis that is driving up health care costs, a crisis that is making Bermuda not look like the sophisticated jurisdiction that we hold ourselves out to be.

This is not about just blame, Mr. Speaker. This is about a systemic approach to actually fixing a systemic problem. And until we do these things, then we should just hold our heads low, because we have no right to call ourselves serious people, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Minister of Cabinet, would you like your 20 minutes?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly will not take 20 minutes. Just for clarity, based on the previous debate, the speaker who sat down was speaking on behalf of the entire One Bermuda Alliance and not just speaking thoughts to himself. Right?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, the last debate, when he said: *I'm not speaking on behalf of my party. I'm speaking for myself.*

The Speaker: Motion to adjourn allows Members to express an open view on any topic.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, I understand that. I just wanted to reference some things, but I didn't want anyone to point-of-order me to say: *I'm not speaking on behalf.*

I really do appreciate that speaker's comments. It's not what I got up to speak about just now, but I do appreciate that speaker's comments.

Mr. Speaker, I've been up here long enough to remember a time when we did work bipartisan when it came to situations like what was just mentioned. And while I do appreciate the suggestions and the seven points that were given, I do know that there is space for us to have those conversations prior to us coming here and just making announcements. And I would encourage Honourable Members opposite to just to reach out and let's have those conversations so we can move forward in a bipartisan way to tackle these types of things that are the scourge of our roads, such as road traffic accidents and the like.

GRADUATION: SIGNATURE SCHOOL DIPLOMA

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But Mr. Speaker, I did get up today to speak to . . . we are at that time of the year, graduation season from our senior schools. Regardless of how you look at it, you only graduate once. I know in Bermuda we use the nomenclature when you leave primary school, we call it "graduation." When you leave middle school, when you leave nursery, you call it graduation. But you only do graduate from senior school, and we are in the process of going through that now.

I do know The Berkeley Institute had their graduation today, this morning, starting while we were here in this House, and CedarBridge Academy will have theirs on Tuesday, Mr. Speaker. It is a special time for the students coming out of our public senior schools. This year is the first [time] students will graduate with a new signature school diploma. And that is a special time, Mr. Speaker. While I do know that we spend a lot of time as adults arguing back and forth on what's going right in education, what's not going right in education, which way it should go, which way it shouldn't go. At the end of the day, everything that we say and do affects those young students who are coming out of high school for the first time.

And regardless of where we stand, or what position we take, or what can be done, what hasn't been done, what should be done, we should all stand up and applaud these young persons as they walk across that stage to get that diploma that they have earned with the four years of schooling that they've put in at the senior level, which is, by extension, the full 13 years that they've taken since they entered into our system at age five.

Mr. Speaker, it's worthy of note that this new diploma wasn't something that was not planned. It wasn't something that just came about. The fact that these students are now the recipients of plans that took hold nearly seven years ago is a testament to when you

have a plan and you say this is what needs to go into it. You have bipartisan conversations around that plan. You do the necessary consultation, and you get the necessary buy-in from all factors of the community to say: *Hey, we want our students to do better.* You end up with what we have today.

Unfortunately, as I said, I was here, I was unable to be at The Berkeley [Institute] graduation. But I certainly will be at CedarBridge on Tuesday as I will be introducing a special award in memory of my father, who was an expert tradesman. And the fact that we have . . . and it will be labelled the Outstanding Tradesperson of the Year for CedarBridge, which has the signature of trades and professions, something that has been asked for by many persons in our society to bring back. And I'm proud to say that does actually appear at CedarBridge.

I'm also happy to say my father, as a qualified electrician . . . I do believe the award will go to some young man who is studying to be an electrician coming out of CedarBridge Academy. So, I'm extremely proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, we did not get to this point by happenstance. As I said, this was years in the making. This was years of having meetings. This was years of critical data research of what Bermuda needs in order for its citizens to succeed in the various professions. And this is how the idea of signatures came about, Mr. Speaker. It has got the buy-in of the signature partners that have signed in, signed on with all of our senior schools. Whether it be from BELCO, whether it be from KPMG, whether it be BUEI [Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute], the Bermuda Aquarium, [Museum and Zoo], whether it be BIOS [Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences], and so many others.

I know when I was last there, we had signed on some Bermudian companies that are not even stationed in Bermuda. But they had signed on to be part of this phenomenon to ensure that our students are prepared to enter into the workforce, if they choose to, or to go on to tertiary education with a better knowledge of what it is that they are good at and what they are interested in.

So, I just want to have an opportunity to speak to that, Mr. Speaker, and encourage all Members of this House, as well as the listening public. Please be ready to encourage these students as they leave our senior schools and head into tertiary education or into the workforce. Because they are the very first recipients of this signature school diploma, and I am very well aware that they are prepared. They are hungry, and they want to be a successful part of our society. And they can only be that if we, as the adults, put aside our differences and stand up and go and support them, Mr. Speaker, as they walk across that stage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Members wish to make a contribution?

MP Shadow Minister of Finance, MP DeCouto.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I have three topics I wish to cover today.

The Speaker: Sure.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: One is a bit administrative, one is a bit informative, and then a plea to the Government for some action.

MINISTERIAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, you know earlier today I alluded to the Ministerial Code of Conduct. And there was a little chatter that I should know my rules. And something that I know I am certainly concerned about, and I believe many of my . . . obviously, I don't speak for them. But my understanding is that many of my colleagues in Opposition are concerned.

Often, we come here to bring questions on material topics for the public, or we put questions on the Order Paper. The question goes on the Order Paper, and then, lo and behold, there's a press conference, or a Ministerial Statement. And then everything is, *Oh, public domain; public domain*. And then we lose the opportunity to exercise our parliamentary privilege here on behalf of the people of Bermuda, which is to challenge, to seek information, to ask questions. And so, since there was a Minister over there . . . I think he misunderstands. If you allow me, can I quote two parts from the Ministerial Code of Conduct?

[No audible response]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you. Section 7.1, Mr. Speaker.

"When Parliament is in session, Ministers will want to bear in mind the desire of Parliament" (that's this whole House) "that the most important announcements of Government policy should, in the first instance, be made in Parliament."

That's the end of the quote. And then that makes the process of asking questions and supplementals available to us to enquire more deeply.

And then the second quote, again, if you'll permit me, Mr. Speaker, is [at section 7.3]:

"[I]n the case of answers to Parliamentary questions, particular care must be taken to avoid making a press announcement before the relevant answer has been delivered to the Member of Parliament who tabled the question."

So, Mr. Speaker, I certainly look forward to the Premier and his Ministers paying careful attention to their Code of Conduct. And if they think it's not suitable, I'm sure they can make the relevant amendments.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, I'm a stickler for the small things. And I think it's important that we in Parliament set a good example of following all the rules and regulations, just like any member of public is expected to. That's why, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to remind this House and the listening public, it has now been six months and two weeks that the Premier has been willingly and knowingly breaking the law by failing to provide to this Parliament the reports required by law.

The Speaker: I do believe he addressed that somewhat at the last occasion, or the occasion before that.

Hon. E. David Burt: A few times.

The Speaker: At least a couple of times.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, I understand that. But I believe it's my privilege to address it again, Mr. Speaker. And if the Premier perhaps is tired of it, I certainly would ask him to provide those reports.

And as he said earlier today, the Government can walk and chew gum at the same time. And I know that there will be great interest in the public as to why the Premier does not want to inform the public of who the ministerial consultants were, and how much they were getting paid.

So, I look forward to that. And if perhaps the Premier doesn't get it done by October, I look forward to the next Premier providing that information as required by law. So, that's some information for the listening public.

ALLSHORES TAX CREDIT

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But those are perhaps administrative, Mr. Speaker. More importantly, as you know, again last week I spoke about this Allshores tax credit, and I was pretty concerned about that. I was pretty concerned about that. And I almost fell out of my seat this week, as I believe many Bermudians did, when I read that they are turning around and doing a \$20-odd million share buyback. So that's taxpayer money, essentially. It is just going straight through into buying back shares.

Now, I don't really blame Allshores for that, per se. They are just—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order. Yes.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He will know very clear and well that tax credits are provisioned in the accounts, and cash is

not given, and cash cannot be given until four years from now.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: The Premier just clarified the process.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, of course, we're not talking about bags of cash here, Mr. Speaker. But we are talking about profit and loss, and account statements. And you know the cash doesn't actually have to show up. You just have to get the credit on the—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. In his statement he said they're taking taxpayer money to buy back. And what I'm making sure that he is clear on, [and] this House is clear on, and the people who are listening [are clear] on, is that there is a provision for tax credits.

But the tax credit legislation that was passed in this House does not mean that those tax credits are actually payable until four years from now in case they actually incur a tax liability under the corporate income tax, which, due to their larger size, they may do. But they do not actually receive anything between now and four years' time.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Be mindful—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —you know, the Premier can talk—

The Speaker: Be mindful of the Premier's clarification.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, well, I provide my own clarification.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Allshores has booked—

The Speaker: He clarified how it operates.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Allshores has booked on its account statement a \$20-odd million credit from the tax credits. It hasn't actually received that cash in hand, but it has booked according to accounting principles audited accounts, put it through shareholders, so it's got

that benefit. When the cash actually shows up, whenever that may be, that will be taxpayers' money.

Now, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member has been misleading the House again.

A provision for tax credits under the Tax Credits Act, yes, it is a qualified refundable tax credit. But it is not payable. And if that company does incur a payroll . . . a corporate income tax liability, which the company in question, given that it operates in more than six jurisdictions, may actually do . . . so, it is incorrect for the Honourable Member to say *when that money comes*.

I'm fine for him to continue his line of work, but he cannot say *when that money comes*, as it is not a certainty. So, it's fine to say that credit has been booked. But to say that they are taking taxpayer money to do a share buyback is not correct, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: All I can tell the listening public, Mr. Speaker, is the company and its accountants think they're getting that money. And, therefore, they have booked it according to generally accepted principles. And I am not one to tell the accountants how to do their job.

Now, we read that they are spending the same amount of money buying back shares. This is what I'm talking about.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I fell out of my seat. And so, I repeat my call to this Government to sort this out, Mr. Speaker.

There is no way . . . and look, I will even give the Premier and the Government . . . it is a little complicated. I'm not going to deny that. But sort it out. There is no way the company should be getting this kind of money. And I'm not blaming the company, frankly. They are just doing what they're going to do. That's the company. There is no way they should be getting this kind of money, and the Government taking no action.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I will repeat again. There is a tax

credit provision that has been put in this company. The Honourable Member keeps on saying that they are getting the money. And he's trying to make it . . . and it is clear that in the Tax Credits Act passed underneath this House there is provision. But there are no funds that are payable for at least four years, if there are funds to be paid. And that is only in case the company does not book a payroll or a corporate income tax liability in the future, which it very well may do because it operates in more than six jurisdictions.

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

I will repeat: The accountants think they're getting the money. That's why they put it on the balance sheet. Anyone in Bermuda who runs a business, whether it's the lemonade stand or the shoe shop, knows when you get an asset and you put it on the books, that's kind of like money to your company.

So, the Premier can get up and talk about all he wants. The problem here, Mr. Speaker, is that the Government has not sorted this out so that the clients of this company—which is most of Bermuda—receive the benefits of this tax credit asset that this company has booked in. And should it get paid, which apparently, in their view, their audited accountant's view, it is probably going to happen. Otherwise, they wouldn't have done it. So, I don't want to second-guess them. And I'm sure the Premier doesn't.

Why do Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda not receive a benefit for that on their premiums?

And we are looking at this incredibly light legislative workload. My personal view is the Government has been spreading out the legislation. I'm glad to see we got a Bill tabled this afternoon, because I didn't know what we were going to do two weeks from now, other than just come up and hear me talk about the missing reports again, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, let me repeat my call to the Premier, to the Minister of Finance, to his Cabinet: Please sort this out so that Bermudians know that their taxpayer money is going to go and benefit them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member should, whenever he's speaking about Allshores, declare his interest as a shareholder.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh my!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is misinforming because if he bothered to pay attention, he would see that I removed those shares from my ownership quite some time ago, precisely because of this nonsense.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And let me say this, Mr. Speaker. If I was an owner, I'd be sitting pretty because I would have just got a 20 per cent benefit on my ownership. And I'm not. So, in fact, I kind of regret doing that because I was sick of hearing from him about it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Now, no more of that, fine. Thank you.
[Does] any other Member wish to speak?
MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, let me apologise for not being here earlier. I finished work at 10:00 this morning, and I was dead tired.

[Inaudible interjections]

LAMB FOGGO URGENT CARE CENTRE

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, I do.

Mr. Speaker, honourable colleagues, listening audience, last week a friend of mine sent me a WhatsApp and said: *Hey, they're talking about the hospital on the radio.* I'm like: *Okay.* I am thinking the Health Minister was on, right? I didn't pay it much mind. They said: *No, no, they're talking bad about the hospital on the radio.*

It was a Sunday morning. I'm like: *What radio station is that!* [So I] went to Hott 107[.5FM]. No, it wasn't there. I went to Power 95, and it wasn't there. I said: *Ah, let me go to the OBAs . . . I mean, Ocean 89 station.*

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Yeah, yeah.

[Inaudible interjections, laughter and desk thumping]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I tuned into Ocean 89, where the host was Mr. David Sullivan—

An Hon. Member: Oh, Lord.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —the person who likes to sideswipe.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Oh-oh!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, there was a person, a guest on there.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: The conversation needs to be directed this way, gentlemen.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, can I reclaim my time?

Mr. Speaker, there was a guest on there, someone who sits in this Chamber on Wednesdays. Let me just put it that way. He was there espousing all this . . . let's just say hyperbolic sort of talk, you know?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, google that, "hyperbolic."

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So anyway, one of the things that caught my attention, because, you know, sometimes people talk like Charlie Brown and you can't pick something up, but then there's a couple of words that catch your attention. The person said the Government needs to invest more in the Lamb Foggo [Urgent Care Centre].

I was like, you know, make it full service because more beds . . . and this . . . and they were going through this list of things that are going wrong at Lamb Foggo [Urgent Care Centre]. In their opinion, I should say.

And then my memory banks kicked in, Mr. Speaker, and I had to google this.

An Hon. Member: No, you didn't.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, I did.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, if you [don't] mind me quoting something from *The Royal Gazette* from 2013.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Headlines: "The Lamb Foggo Clinic [protest] march."

"Protestors march to the House of Assembly in order to present the Premier" (Hmm, who was that?) "with a petition in hopes to keep the Lamb Foggo Clinic open."

Mr. Speaker, I then have this thing called Google Pictures. I looked up my Google Pictures, and there it was. A lot of people from down at St. David's and other parts of the Island converging on the House of Assembly because the OBA wanted to close down the Lamb Foggo [Urgent Care Centre].

The then Shadow Health Minister (I can't call her name, but you know, we all know who it was) used to give all these excuses as to why it should be closed down. And then it was revealed that possibly some private medical doctors wanted to take it over.

The Speaker: Members, Members, Members.

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I fast forward to 2026. And I said, *What would have happened to St. David's had the people not stood up against the OBA's plans to close down Lamb Foggo?* And we have the person who sits in this room on a Wednesday blaming us, the PLP, for Lamb Foggo, when his party wanted to shut it down.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I digress.

Two weeks ago, a certain speaker who stood up just before me, amongst others (because I'm speaking for all of them), sent in this list, a long list, to relevant Ministers as to what CARICOM could do for Bermuda. I'm paraphrasing. The list included:

To the Minister of Housing: Can CARICOM help to bring down the cost of construction? Can CARICOM help with housing?

To the Minister of Education: Can CARICOM help with education?

To the Minister or Junior Minister responsible for prisons: Can CARICOM help with that?

And also to the relevant Health Minister: Can CARICOM help with the seniors?

Mr. Speaker, when I was in the Army, I heard this term called "red herring."

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, wait for it.

An Hon. Member: Let them hang on.

Another Hon. Member: I've been waiting a long time.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Mr. Christopher Famous: In the Army, they taught us this term called red herring, questions to which you fully

know the answer already, or you think you know the answer already but you want to ask, mainly because you want to look like you know what you're talking about, but you actually don't.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I searched all through the Hansard. And I asked myself: *Has the OBA ever asked the UK the same questions? Have they ever asked the UK: Do you help Bermuda with housing?* The answer is no. *Do they help them with the cost of construction?* The answer is no. *Do they help with education?* The answer is no. *Do they help with prisons?* The answer is no. *Do they help with seniors?* The answer is—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No.

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, on one hand, we have a—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Perhaps unintentionally, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. He may have forgotten the UK's vaccines that saved so many seniors' lives.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, the question in the thing was not about vaccines. At least be specific when you ask questions.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I understand you all are grieving, but whatever.

Mr. Speaker, the same question is never asked about the UK, who is our colonial administrative power. What are they doing to assist Bermuda and the other Overseas Territories? Because, quite frankly, they're not doing anything. But somehow, we still have to recognise them as our administrative power.

Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is impossible for us to ask a Parliamentary Question in the House of Assembly that the UK would then answer. We have to [ask] those questions of the Government. And that's what we did in this way.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, in April of 2026, the House of Lords [Constitution] Committee said it's "urgently needed" that a White Paper be there for the Overseas Territories, because the 14-year-old White Paper is antiquated and does not serve the Overseas Territories.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, the King of England came here. And along with him came some Ministers. One of those was Mr. Stephen Doughty, the Minister responsible for the Overseas Territories.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Doughty was featured in the paper yesterday . . . two days ago, *The Royal Gazette*, where it said that the UK Government rejects any White Paper for the Overseas Territory. They prefer to just give their own suggestions, which basically means that a White Paper that will come from the Overseas Territories listing things that the UK can do to assist them, they reject it.

So, I ask, Mr. Speaker, on one hand you have persons [asking] red herring questions about something they know the answer [to] already, but they make no effort—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Imputing improper motive.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I await your ruling.

The Speaker: Just restate what you . . . I'm trying to pick up the . . . just restate what you said.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to clarify imputing improper motive.

The Honourable Member pointed out that there was a red herring that the OBA either knew the answer to these questions, or in some way, shape, or fashion was setting up the Government.

And the simple fact of the matter is that Parliamentary Questions are a simple constitutional mecha-

nism that we use to enquire [about] certain things of the Government. The motive was clear: We asked questions, and we would like some answers.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, nowhere in the Government's Green Paper did they say all these things that they claim—nowhere in the Green Paper. So, I don't know why they asked it.

Mr. Speaker, the point I want to get at for the people of Bermuda is: We hold the UK in such high reverence. The King comes and everybody stands up like, you know, Jesus has returned.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: You didn't invite us!

Another Hon. Member: It was an exclusive event in Bermuda.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, I didn't go, bro.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, but the reality is when the Overseas Territories (nice name for "colonists") simply say we need a revised agreement between us and the UK, the UK House of Commons said no.

So, we have to take into consideration, well, if our administrative power is not assisting us, we can't get help from the US . . . Hmm, we can't get help from Canada. Where else can we turn, Mr. Speaker? Either we sit here on our own, or we look out for others who have similar situations as us.

So, I say all that today, Mr. Speaker, [to say] that the next time the OBA asks anything about CARICOM (right?), ask themselves where else we can get help from, or assistance, technical assistance, advice, whatever. Can we get it from the UK? The answer is no.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close with this.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to close with this.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yesterday, there was an article by somebody else sitting in the House (with glasses on) talking about pay transparency. [On] one hand he said: *It's good to have pay transparency*. Then he said: *Well, maybe not too much transparency because that could cause people to possibly leave the Island*. I'm paraphrasing. So, feel free to point-of-order [me].

Mr. Speaker, one of the problems that we have in this country is when our people—"our people," meaning Bermudians—go away, get educated, the same education as people from abroad, and they come back here. There's been anecdotal evidence that they aren't getting paid the same as somebody who ain't from here. So now that there's possibly legislation coming along to help I put this out in the open. We have the OBA, or somebody from the OBA, saying: *Well, maybe transparency, total transparency is not good*. What are we telling our people?

I await the point of order.

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

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Mr. Speaker, the piece that the Member is making reference to was an overall balanced approach pointing out what the pros and cons are on both sides of the argument. In fact, I've made it clear that in some circumstances it can be supported and some not. He's characterising it as to say, out of the gate, it's not supported by the OBA. That is not what that article said. He's being deliberately inflammatory and he's misleading the House.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I can quote him all day if he wants. The point is, if you're going to be transparent, you have to be fully transparent. You can't be partially transparent.

What he's asking for, or what he's suggesting, is that the legislation be partially transparent. And that, to me, Mr. Speaker, is hypocritical.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Opposition Whip.

ALLSHORES TAX CREDIT

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since we're talking about insurance, I just want to appeal to the Government. You know, there was a promise made some time ago, a few years ago, that we would bring legislation to the table that would address some of the potential unfortunate mergers into monopolies for Bermuda. I'm just urging the Government if we can pick that back up again. It was very clear that something would be happening (and these are my words) more imminently. And it has been a few years, and it hasn't happened.

So, I will use just as an example of some of the fears that I had with these mergers. And I will use myself just as an example. I insure four members of my family, to the tune of \$4,600-and-something a month for health insurance.

An Hon. Member: Wow!

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So undoubtedly after the merger, and yes, this is with Allshore, the same company that I called the director, one of the directors there, and didn't get a call back. [It was] just to try to get some feedback.

And so, when I received the increase, of course, my accountant called and said: *Listen, your increase for this coming year (after paying \$4,600-plus a month for four family members) is going up by \$3,000 a month.*

An Hon. Member: Whew!

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Now, imagine that. I've been saying all along that health insurance is the new mortgage. That's a whopping \$30,000-plus annually for a health insurance premium.

Now, I will say that I have a good insurance plan. Yes. And, you know, maybe I need to reconsider and save in some areas. It is a wonderful plan that I do have, and have had it for many, many, many years because the coverage is excellent. But when you start talking about those kinds of increases, I'm feeling it. I know it. I know the numbers. And when my accountant calls to say, can . . . can. . . can—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, yes. And that's what I've been saying. Just look into it. Talk to these officials because this is not something that's pie in the sky. This is a reality. It is an actual reality.

You know, I'm not sure what others are saying on the floor right now. There's a question mark there. I'm telling you the actual numbers. I'm not going to stand up and tell the public my insurance plan like it's not real. I'm telling you the actual numbers. Those are the numbers.

So, I made some calls, and I got some calls back. It took a long time to get some calls back and the like. Okay, well, fine. You know, and the numbers were being thrown back. *Well, maybe it wasn't really right this, or it should have been that, and it should have*

been this. Well, at the end of the day, \$4,600 a month is even quite hefty for four individuals.

Fortunately, I've been able to pay that insurance. But I recognise also that there are many who have health coverage insurance, and they are nowhere near close to being able to afford to pay that. It is a real concern of mine. You know, I'm not getting exercised by it. I'm just telling you the facts . . . just telling you the facts. That's what it is. And then for me to see that with the merger they saved—or gained, as they said—\$64 million, and then, of course, now I'm hearing that, you know, they are going to get tax credits and the like.

You look at the American system. And what they've done craftily with their system is that if an insurance company has gains of over a certain percentage, then that money has to be turned back into reducing the premiums. We don't have that here. We have a higher standard for those who want to get into the insurance companies by the BMA, and it has set us apart, obviously. They have to have a large amount of money in the kitty even before they open up their doors.

And I will say this here, you know, with the government plan, I mean, it has been a place for people to go because they just can't afford it. You know? So, I'm not throwing stones at anyone here. I'm just laying out what the realities are. And the best way that I can, is to say what I'm experiencing. The best way I can let you know it's exorbitant. Right?

So, I've been saying for years now that we are going to see these premiums continue to increase as we have these monopolies. I've talked about it before. And, yes, we have got to be tender about how we deal with these things. Bermudians have got shares in the company and all the like. But you are also hearing about how the company is just making out quite well. And if you look at the model (I need to be fair to the insurance companies), they are operating with some pretty tight margins as well.

But there's more that we can do as a Parliament to help keep some of these things in check. And I don't believe that we have done enough. And our Government has said that they were going to assist in this area, and I am still waiting for the legislation to come forward that is going to help us with this here.

And that's all I am going to say. So, I am hoping that we see some legislation come forward. This is certainly unsustainable when people are finding it very difficult to afford to live in Bermuda. Bermudians are finding it extremely difficult. And we have always had great health insurance in Bermuda, but we have got to do something about it.

LAMB FOGGO URGENT CARE CENTRE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And so, I will move on from there and just go on to some of the comments that the prior Member stood up and talked about. And that's the Lamb Foggo [Urgent Care Centre]. I don't believe that

he told the full story. Lamb Foggo [Urgent Care Centre] is still open. It never closed under the OBA.

There was . . . it was publicised that the Government, OBA, was looking at closing the doors. And I can say with clarity that upon my return to the Island, I told Cabinet that will never happen. The same thing that I am sure the PLP would have done was what I did as the Premier. That was just not going to happen. Not going to happen. Over \$200,000 short. Just not going to happen.

And so, I interjected in that conversation when I got back on the Island and found out [about] some of the decisions that had been made and interjected to ensure that it was never going to happen. And I was glad to receive the petition that my fellow colleagues from St. David's were keenly upset about it.

But one of the facts that I do know is that under the PLP Government, the hours have even been shortened from what it was back then.

An Hon. Member: No!

Another Hon. Member: What?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The hours of opening have even shortened.

An Hon. Member: Reduced services?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And so, it is an option, a great option to look at Lamb Foggo for extending services from King Edward Memorial to have in the East End. And I think it is a wonderful idea that we should be looking at how we can invest more money into our people. And our Government continuously talks about how it's investing in its people. So, this is a great opportunity for us to alleviate some of the strain that is happening down at King Edward Memorial, and look at a real possibility of Lamb Foggo being one of those places that we can beef up, as opposed to the redacted or reduced number of hours that it is opened since the OBA was Government.

I mean, it's a bit hypocritical to get up and throw stones when you have reduced the hours of opening from what it used to be. So, when Members want to get up and talk about looking in the paper, well, do it comprehensively. As he said, be transparent. It's clear. We did not close it down.

And yes, it was being discussed heavily at that time. Maybe it should be closed down. But it never—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, it was announced that we were looking to close it down. It never happened. It never happened because clearer minds—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Honourable Member is misleading the House, I think, unintentionally, because I was at that protest, and I spoke at that protest. Right? So, the fact of the matter is that the decision was made. That's why it was such an uproar. So, to say that no decision was made is untrue, and it's not factual. I think he is unintentionally misleading the House. And the last time I looked, Mr. Speaker, Cabinet makes collective decisions.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I can't say thank you for that, because quite frankly, it's foolhardy what he just said. Cabinet did discuss it. And as I said, I sat down with Cabinet and told them it's not going to happen.

Whether it went into *The Royal Gazette* or not, the Honourable Member was not within those closed doors on what was being discussed and what was being said. And, for that matter, I was at the protest myself. And I stood in front of everyone and told them point blank—*Lamb Foggo Clinic will not close*. Whether he spoke or not, makes no hill of beans to me—

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —because it never was going to close.

So, the Honourable Member needs to just sit down and listen. If he was fully transparent he would acknowledge the fact that the OBA did not close it, but that the PLP (with Lamb Foggo [Urgent Care Centre]) has reduced the operating hours that were happening then. Has reduced them.

So yes, go on and you look it up. They have reduced the hours. How, in clear conscience, can the PLP get up and [raise] a point of order or say whatever when they are providing less services?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The last time I looked—

The Speaker: What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: The last time I looked, the PLP headquarters was at 16 Court Street. I don't recall anything on the PLP agenda about closing hours at Lamb Foggo. I do believe it's operated by a board. I do believe.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, what is he talking about? We didn't say close down. I said shorten hours.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order, Minister.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I think the Honourable Member is inadvertently misleading the House. As has been stated in this Honourable House on several occasions, as recently as the budget, the regrettable challenges that we are having with respect to recruitment of overseas nurses and other medical professionals is (as a result) why the Lamb Foggo facility is being operated on reduced hours.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I thank the Honourable Member for that.

Then fix it! You should have fixed it before!

Now I'm getting exercised. You knew it was coming. You could see it clear as day. The tea leaves were laid out. My goodness. We are having a problem recruiting doctors. And guess what? We're still having a problem recruiting doctors. And guess what? All-shores is gobbling up all the doctors to be a monopoly.

An Hon. Member: Correct.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The tea leaves, Mr. Speaker. The tea leaves.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: My goodness. I am trying to be cool here; but we got a problem. We got a Government—

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We got a Government . . . actually, this is a nice cool suit. We got a Government.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: That's what you need.

The Speaker: Just speak to the Chair. Just speak to the Chair.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I need some SoBe tea.

The Speaker: Just speak to the Chair.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Health Minister, can you get me some tea?

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair . . . speak to the Chair. You'll be all right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I have a little point of order. Did the Honourable Member say read leaves or smoke them?

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: What?

The Speaker: Now, now, let's not go down funny roads.

Member, were you finished?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I conclude, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Really, I am just looking for legislation to address this issue when it comes to the hospital. Please, Government. I am willing to assist. I am bearing my soul here about what I am experiencing with the various insurance companies. We got to do something here. And too many people are talking about it.

[There are] two things people are talking about right now as you go out. Everybody's been talking about it. I am not talking about the roads. We know the Minister's doing his job. He is trying to get them covered. It'll be another 10 years, but he is trying to get it done.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But, you know, education and this health thing. Man, it is a real challenge. And I'll leave the education to the education people. But this health thing, it is really bothersome.

We are getting calls all the time. And I am grateful. You know, the Minister, whenever I call the Minister . . . I am going to give the Minister kudos. The Minister answers. And sometimes I get up and get exercised. But the Minister, every time I call her, if she can't speak to me right then, she does call back. She actually does call back. So, I am grateful for the relationship that I do have.

But, Minister, I need you to get Cabinet to fix this thing now. It's got to be fixed because more is coming. More is coming. So, please, before I do need a fan from the Honourable [Member] Famous . . . Minister, let's fix this thing and get some legislation in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member . . . Minister.
Minister of Health.

HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS RISING COST

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

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks and as recently as 20 seconds ago, we have heard a lot of discussion in the public domain as it relates to increased premiums. Premiums, of course, that are related specifically to private insurance companies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that the role of the Opposition is a very important one in any democracy. And they are responsible to ask questions, challenge proposals, challenge the Government and raise issues that warrant further public consultation. And for that, I am grateful. And that scrutiny can be healthy, especially when it helps to strengthen policy decisions and so forth, particularly in areas that are incredibly important to individuals, such as health and health care and health premiums.

Mr. Speaker, no one disputes that health care affordability and the rising insurance premiums . . . The Honourable Member spoke about, I guess, a 30 per cent increase in his premiums in a private entity. These are legitimate concerns of all Bermudians—their families, employers, seniors—everyone. And we hear it on our doorsteps with individuals providing demonstrative examples of how their insurance premiums have increased year over year, particularly with respect to private insurers.

However, Mr. Speaker, there is an important distinction between raising concerns and advancing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, proposals such as directly regulating health insurance premiums must be grounded in the full evidence and understanding of how health care systems operate and what the wider consequences could be. Mr. Speaker, health care is a highly interconnected system. Measures that could potentially seek to restrict premium adjustments, for example, may not reduce underlying costs and instead may lead to some unintended consequences. Deductible increases, provider choice narrowing, overseas access and the like.

And let me give you some examples of what's happened in other jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. When policies are implemented to, for example, reduce the ability for premiums to increase, the unintended consequences could be as follows:

Reduced benefits. So, an individual may have five office visits per year. However, that's reduced to two. Mr. Speaker, \$3,000 a year drug benefit could be reduced to \$1,000. Higher deductibles. Lower provider reimbursement rates. So, if the reimbursement rate is \$500 for a \$600 service and the insurance company re-

duces that reimbursement rate, you bet you will pay more as a co-pay.

Narrower networks. In other words, there will be fewer overseas locations for individuals to access overseas care because the networks are reduced. These are all potentially unintended consequences if we were to make strides and indicate that there could be no premium increases.

I am saying all this to say, Mr. Speaker, it is important that these concrete examples and consequences that can arise by making policies based on saying, *This is what the public wants; so, we are going to say that we will not increase premiums* (because it is incredibly popular right now), in the small market of Bermuda these impacts and the effects of these types of choices could have severe consequences on providers and, in particular, the Bermuda public. That is why, Mr. Speaker, policy in this area must be approached carefully based on evidence and system-wide data as well as an analysis of the interventions and what the unintended consequences could very well be.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is committed, and we have spoken about this publicly, to addressing health care affordability and ensuring a sustainable, accessible system for all, including that 12 per cent of individuals who are uninsured. However, it is taking a structured and measured approach by exploring the development of a review framework.

And what do I mean by that, Mr. Speaker? We will be providing for a review framework. So, in circumstances where significant health care system changes are being proposed, those changes have to go through a review framework process to ensure that the consumers are protected. So, the purpose, Mr. Speaker, of this framework is not to set prices or interfere with the day-to-day operations of businesses, or innovation for that matter. It is to ensure that material changes that affect our health care system are reviewed in advance so that their impact on affordability, access, competition, and system stability can be properly assessed.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, Bermuda's health care system is undergoing significant changes with respect to new technologies, advances in pharmaceutical products, evolving provider and insurer models, as well as broader system reforms. And in such a small and interconnected system such as ours, decisions by one actor can have wide-ranging impacts, as we have seen. And at present, there is no formal requirement for advanced notification of major system changes. And that means the Government may not become aware of any of these impacts until after their implementation.

So, what is proposed, as we have spoken about previously, is a review framework, Mr. Speaker. And that review framework will be established to address any significant health care system changes that would require advanced notification in this framework for things such as major premium increases, provider consolidations, exclusive networks, service closures, or significant benefit or reimbursement changes. If any of

those above circumstances occur, the Bermuda Health Council will then conduct a time-limited review and provide the advice to the Minister, who will in turn determine what the appropriate response should be with respect to those examples that I listed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the mandate of the Bermuda Health Council is they are responsible for regulation, coordination of health care, and enhancing health care services across the Island. And the approach that I've just spoken about, Mr. Speaker, is meant to be targeted and proportionate. It is not about regulating every decision but about ensuring that significant system-wide changes within our health sector are properly understood before they take effect.

Mr. Speaker, internationally, similar advances and these types of mechanisms exist in jurisdictions like the United States, Australia, Canada, and other United States. And these systems are designed not to prevent innovation, but to ensure that major changes are implemented in a way that protects patients and system sustainability. And, Mr. Speaker, the Government's approach reflects a simple principle: Meaningful health care reform requires more than reacting to individual proposals. It requires a framework, Mr. Speaker, that allows the Government to understand and assess the broader impact of major changes before they take effect and the unintended consequences that could happen to members of the public.

Health care affordability remains a serious challenge. And the Government is committed, and remains committed, to addressing it. But solutions must be evidence-based, system-aware, and designed to avoid unintended consequences that could ultimately reduce access or increase the cost to Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, that is the purpose of the Government's planned proposal as it relates to the review framework, which, again, is going to be established to ensure that any significant health care system changes have to be addressed first. And that will help to ensure transparency, accountability, and better-informed decision-making in the public interest.

Let me end where I began, Mr. Speaker. Again, the role of the Opposition is to challenge and question. And that's an important element of our democracy. The role of the Government is to govern responsibly, anticipate risk and unintended consequences, and ensure that policy decisions are informed by evidence and the broader public interest. Mr. Speaker, the proposed review framework for significant health care system changes reflects that responsibility.

And I also submit, Mr. Speaker, that it is a measured and forward-looking approach designed to strengthen transparency, improve accountability, and ensure that major health care system changes are considered carefully before they affect the people of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

MP Swan.

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

The Speaker: MP, would you like to clarify right now?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: The Member, when he was on his feet to indicated that some of the figures he used, he just found that they were off. He just wants to put his—

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I want to make sure that the numbers are correct. So, for four people, I just pulled out my statement, I'm paying \$8,871. Four people. Think about that.

An Hon. Member: Whew!

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: My accountant sent a note to me and [said]: *It appears that it will increase monthly by \$2,800.* I'm just reading it now from my insurance. Okay? I just wanted to clarify that.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, \$8,800 for four people a month. And it's increasing by almost \$3,000 a month.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: That would hurt.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It's right here.
You want to come? Come see it.

An Hon. Member: No way.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I got it right here.

The Speaker: MP Swan, you can do your presentation now.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had to attend an important event this morning, and I apologise that after the ten o'clock roll call, I couldn't be present when we had [congratulatory and obituary speeches.] I think I walked in just as it had concluded. So, I'm going to take a little bit of time on the motion to adjourn to do something that I would have done this morning.

Taking place at 4:00 pm this afternoon is the funeral service of a well-respected St. Georgian who I

have known personally since 1980. His name is Robert "Skippy" Lewis. I got to know Robert "Skippy" Lewis, Mr. Speaker, when we both served on the St. George's Golf Course Advisory Committee when I was first appointed, when I returned home from university. The Honourable Ralph O. Marshall, [CBE], who I have known for quite a number of years, appointed me to my first government advisory board. I was grateful for the expertise that I brought to the formation of the St. George's Golf Club, which opened five years later and served Bermuda well. I went on to become the general manager there and the golf professional for some stint of nearly 15 to 20 years, thereabouts.

Mr. Robert Lewis was well-known in the shipping industry for Bermuda container lines. And when I speak about Robert "Skippy" Lewis, Mr. Speaker, I can't help but think of the late Victor Mello, Jr., another St. Georgian who I knew through golf back in the early 1980s. And those young fellas came up in St. George's, St. George's byes, who, through being a maritime seaport like you would find in Dockyard, especially, they would produce a lot of persons who would find work in that industry.

And Robert "Skippy" Lewis would work his way in the shipping industry and become a very successful businessman. I later got to know Robert "Skippy" Lewis more personally in a political capacity. And I just spent a lot of time with him. And his wife, Valerie, [whom] he leaves to mourn, was a long-time person at a pharmacist down at Robertson's Drug Store.

And, you know, with modern . . . not relying on the newspaper the way we used to, sometimes these things slip past you. But I would have been remiss if I didn't express my condolences [regarding] this gentleman, this St. Georgian, and the Lewis family from St. George's. [He] was well known and well-regarded. And I thought a great deal of him.

I also would have given special acknowledgement, which I am sure was mentioned this morning, of the 100th sailing of the Newport to Bermuda yacht race. I declare my interest. I grew up in a maritime family. I am the great offspring of . . . I am the grandson of a fisherman and a farmer. But I am also an offspring of Charles Roach Ratteray. And it's well documented that he built schooners and brigandines out of Somerset, out of Harman's Bay, and would have traded down in the islands back in the 1800s.

And so, I have always had a fond love for the Newport to Bermuda yacht race, Mr. Speaker. The ultimate sports tourism initiative. And sports tourism and cultural tourism are very important to Bermuda and important to this Government.

BERMUDIAN CULTURE

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And I will just segue before I dive a little deeper into Newport and say that I am very proud of the Government in connecting the dots with sports tourism, cultural tourism, art tourism as well, and

other aspects of the unseen . . . the things that touch your heart, allowing people to be connected with our unique authenticity in this area. And you have seen the younger generation. And I will declare my interest. On Bermuda Day I would like to see more people sailing in the Comet Race than out there in boats following the Comet Race. And I gave a challenge to my cousins and those of us who love comet racing. The answer to that is not for us Comet Race lovers to complain while all the young people are following Carnival. The challenge for us in sailing, and particularly comet sailing, is to get more young people on the water sailing in those types of boats. It's on us.

Because when I went through Town Cut for the first time in my life, it wasn't by my choice. It was in 1961 or 1962, when I was about three or four years old, when my grandfather, John Anderson, didn't accept his daughter dropping her child, leaving her child at home to go down in the . . . from Scaur and go down and watch Gladwin Lambert sail for the first time as a skipper, having been co-pilot to the late Colin Pearman, the undertaker, when he used to sail.

No! My grandfather said: *You would, huh?* [He] picked that little *bye* up, threw him in the submerged torch, and took him out in White Hill. And next thing you know, that lot was looking at it, and saying, *Who's that little boat coming through the cut?* That can't be the submerged torch. My daddy must be crazy bringing my little child down through the Town Cut in 1961 or 1962 to follow his grandson, Gladwin, sailing for the first time. He would later go on and win the race in 1977. He won it the year before I won the Bermuda Open Golf Championship in 1978. I was proud that my cousin, Gladwin, won the Comet Race in 1977. Because we were a family of sailors and golfers, musicians, and the like.

And that's why I love Newport, because as a child my uncle used to pack us up in the boat after they had spent two weeks down at St. David's Island off of the finish line. Uncle Franny, I always called him Uncle Franny Hall, because he was Franny Richardson. And I'll declare . . . I'll declare interest forward, his daughter sits in this very House, straight across from me. He was one of those persons with my . . . with my . . . they called him "the cook," Uncle Franny. His daughter's a Member of Parliament for constituency 36. All right?

And my Uncle Chester Hall. Right? There, all there. And you know my Uncle Bill Anderson was the skipper. Bill Anderson would tell me stories. He said, *Listen, we would go down and spend two weeks off St. David's in our boat, and we would dock our boat right off of Black Horse, cook fish, mingle with St. David's Islanders.* Culture that people need to know about. Right?

And so, if we want more Bermudians on the water, enjoying our waters, I have been advocating for us to have more ferries and stuff. The way we do it is we have got to find a way to teach our young people how to use the water, how to sail, and how to make good use of the most precious resource that surrounds

us. So, it's on us. It's not on the Government, you know. Because the Government didn't take me through Town Cut to allow me the passion to be able to speak today. My grandfather did that.

So, those who like these . . . I see folks running around with balloons today for graduation. Some fathers can't; they got to work. But the fathers who are out there day in and day out are leaving memories with children who will remember them 20, 30 years from now. Those are the unsung heroes, too, along with mothers. Very important.

I was walking in St. George's this week. Gave some of the best advice I could give in my life. Not worried about the rain. Had to step out of the rain. Not because I minded getting wet. I was enjoying it. But if my cell phone gets too wet, it's not going to work. So, I walked underneath Somers Playhouse. A young fella, maybe in his late 20s or so, was standing underneath there looking perplexed.

I said: *You all right?*

[He said:] *This rain, man.*

I said: *It's okay. It's just a little water.*

He said: *No, I've got to go get my bye.* So, he had a little quandary. He had to go pick up his son, right?

And I said to him: *What you're about to do is the most important duty of your life.* I said: *What you're setting out to do to rendezvous with your son is what 40 years from now he will remember.*

I was there contemplating what someone meant to me when I was writing an obituary for someone who sat in this House whose father I knew when I was a teenager. And when I said that I could call up his photo in an instant, I had to ask myself, and that young man was there, why? Because we spent meaningful time in a grocery store. We spent meaningful time running errands. We spent meaningful time around our mutual love for golf. Forty . . . no, 50 years later, because he died in 1975, in June, the late John Nicholas Swan. Fifty-one years later, I can remember him. That is what we need.

And you know what? You cannot glean that reading it. You cannot glean that just talking to somebody. You have to glean that by getting involved in lives. That is why I go up to Dalton Tucker, because there is a school that people refer to as "DET." I say, no, I did not grow up going to DET. I grew up going to Dalton E. Tucker. Why? Because I knew Dalton E. Tucker, Mr. Speaker. I think you did, too. I think the Honourable Member from [constituency] 36, too. I knew Dalton Tucker when she held a belt in her hand and she doggone gave you a few belts because you deserved it. I can feel them. But she licked Adelle harder than us. And you could hear her right down the hallway.

I say that to say this, Mr. Speaker: It is about culture. It is about what it is going to take to really capture the soul and the hearts of our people in this country. And I am telling you that I got this, talking about this,

just by talking about Newport. Newport is not just a race. The Edward Cross [Comet] Memorial is just not a race. Carnival is just not a party time. These events are touching people's souls, whether you like it or not, in differing ways. It is not my cup of tea, the latter. It is my wife's—Belizean girl.

It was the wife of my cousin who sat in this House, the late Honourable Stanley Ratteray, first Education Minister, whose porch I grew up under, running under, when the parties of all the elite were happening up on Coral Acres. My cousin from Somerset, yes. His wife came from the islands. She loved Carnival, just like my wife. Might not dress exactly the same way. They were similar.

I am just saying, that your culture evolves from where you are. And it is important. Half of our problem in this country is we have not allowed ourselves to understand who we truly are. I have been blessed in life, to have running through my veins, and to have in my spirit, cultures from the widest district of this globe, and married into the portions that I do not. Asia, through my stepchildren. Understanding the importance of these cultures. The late Dorothy Chin [Brandt], first Asian American elected to the bar, to be a judge in America, my close friend who died in 2025, of January, just before the election.

And that is why I know history and culture of my Asian cousins and family, history and culture of my European cousins and family, are just as important to the history of my African family and community. And my Latin American family and community. And my Irish and Scottish family and community. It is important to them. We need to stop intellectualising when it comes to CARICOM. Those of us whose families came to the Dockyard, those of us whose families came here like the Honourable Member from my White Hill constituency, grandfather, Mr. Snaith, came here not too dissimilar to the way George DaCosta came here to Berkeley. Not too dissimilar to the way Victor Scott came to Bermuda. They came to educate. Not too dissimilar to the way Mr. Manchester came up from St. Kitts and Anguilla to educate us at the Berkeley. Not too dissimilar to my teacher (trying to think of her name right now) who died on the *Christena* down in St. Kitts in my first year in Berkeley, Mr. Speaker. I will never forget why that woman loved me so much. And I cried when she died that Christmas. Because she could see St. Kitts in me!

And guess what? When I got to know Dame Lois Browne-Evans very well, very well, so much so that when I was Opposition Leader and my daughter going to Mount Saint Agnes had an issue, I drove down past Saltus on St. John's Road. Stopped at the stop sign (There wasn't a roundabout there.), went across the street and told her my problems. And she shared with me, with the crossword puzzle on the floor, the same problem she had when her child went to Mount Saint Agnes. The same problem!

And I am here to tell you, Mr. Speaker, these things speak to our culture. Speak to who we are as people. Because when I present that problem to somebody, who does not come from the community, they do not understand it. We deserve to be connected. And I said it in this House, we deserve to be connected with CARICOM in the same way we need to be closer connected with the Azores. The same way we have always been connected with the United Kingdom. We owe it to ourselves to stop being in denial that we have lived the greatest self-hate.

And in closing, Mr. Speaker, let me share this with folks as I go down in memory lane. I did not plan to go here, but I got led here. I remember, and you will remember, Mr. Speaker, when the Progressive Labour Party in Opposition, during the budget, put forward a motion for one department to receive one dollar. One dollar! Remember that, Mr. Speaker? Honourable Member Whip, you remember that? That is the type of courage and conviction . . . I understand what it means today. One dollar. The Progressive Labour Party . . . L. Frederick Wade might have been the Shadow Finance Minister then. [Dame] Lois Browne-Evans would have been the Opposition Leader then. Mr. Cox, or maybe Mr. Cox was the Shadow Finance Minister then, and L. Frederick Wade was the Opposition Leader. I give or take a little bit there.

But I remember that type of conviction! Why? Because our connections with those Dockyard persons that had to come here to find a different living, while it is similar, it is different from the ones who came here to educate us. We come from the Caribbean, just like our families come from the Azores, just like our families might come from Ireland, for different reasons than those who might come from England. And so, it is important upon us not to ask anybody's permission, whether or not we think this is important. Because sometimes in leadership, you have to have the courage enough to take the bull by the horns and do what is right for the people.

Thank you.

The Speaker: All right. Thank you.

MP Tucker, would you like to make a contribution?

EMERGENCY ROOM CHRONIC OVERCROWDING

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would, Mr. Speaker, good afternoon. Thank you.

We have had some conversation about health care. So, I actually . . . This is something that has come up for me on multiple occasions in my speaking with constituents, as well as personal experience. I would like to say, because, again, I recognise that we are not here for ourselves. We did not send ourselves here, and we have an accountability to our constituents to bring things, and advocate on their behalf.

When I was out canvassing not too long ago, one of my constituents mentioned to me an experience that she had in the hospital. Her experience was not great. She was in the overflow unit. She mentioned that there was really nowhere for her to go. She was really just stuck in the bed. She said it was divided by curtains, and she could hear everybody else's business, and obviously when the doctors came [and] the nurses came to speak to her, that people could hear all of her business as well. Since then, I have spoken to a few other people who have had similar experiences.

So, as we are talking about . . . we were talking about insurance earlier, but I just wanted to bring things, look at, or I should say speak to, the other side of it as well. And that is the practical experience that people are having in the hospital, because there was some mention of nursing shortages and the like.

Now, why it is important, another reason it is important to bring that up, and the experiences that my constituents and the few other people who have said to me, is because what was interesting is that, to me anyway, is that a few people that I have spoken to have checked themselves out of the hospital against doctor's advice. And that is because . . . and this is what they have said to me. That the conditions were such where they just could not stay, and so they have left. What I am worried about is, like I said, this is not just one person that said this. There are multiple people that have said this. And so, what I am worried about is perhaps creating a . . . a . . . or we may be seeing the beginnings of a trend of people who are doing the same, which is highly problematic.

So, I want to put that here, and I am just going to put a pin in that for a second, because we have all heard about the people, the patients lined up in the hallways and whatnot. I had a personal experience. I was in the hospital for four and a half days in emergency, and I just got out of the hospital on Tuesday. And so, my experience was mixed. I had some very attentive nurses, and I have had some nurses that were not great. Bedside manner was not great. I made my experience known while I was still in the hospital. I had a situation where I was brought my linen so I could change my own bed. I was woken up at two o'clock in the morning with bright lights, no warning. *Oh, we have come to take your vitals.* Nothing. Woke me out of a dead sleep, scared me half to death. And then, of course, on another day I heard patients outside . . . I'm sorry, family of patients outside screaming to the top of their lungs because of the type of care that they felt that their loved one was getting.

So, I want to raise that here, now, as well, because obviously there is a review happening at the hospital, and I am grateful for that. But I also want to express concern over the fact that we do have nursing shortages, we do have doctor shortages, but where people are stretched, where people are doing double shifts, where we have nurses who are leaving their units to come and fill in at the emergency room and the

like, people cannot do that on a sustained basis. They have to be able to have breaks, sufficient breaks, so that they can rest and recover like the rest of us. And so, where we start to see a lot of care downfalls could very well be that people are just simply overstretched. We have seen the numbers, the overtime numbers, that are being paid out. We have seen that in health care. We have seen it in prisons. We have seen it in police. And I appreciate that it is difficult to find staff.

But we have to also . . . and I say that because I am in HR. I have difficulty sometimes finding staff, too. But when we are talking about our essential services, we have to also look at the conditions that are not making us attractive enough, for enough people to want to come to work here.

And I just want to raise something as well, and something else as well, is that everybody's seen the front page of the paper, the taxi driver telling the woman to go home, and all of that stuff. I do not want to speak to that specific situation. But what I do want to say is that while I was in the hospital, someone had made mention to me that there are all these foreigners here. Well, if they were not here, who would we have? Bermudians? If we did not have the foreigners working in . . . in . . . I do not know, Four Star pizza, who are we going to have? Who is stepping? Who is the Bermudian? I am calling the Bermudians now. Step up and go get the jobs. Show up and perform.

We have to start being real and honest. I did not come here to do all this fluffy stuff and gain votes. If I lose votes because I am telling the truth, I am willing to do that. Because I am here for the benefit of the country and the people, not because I care so much about votes that I am going to just gloss over things and act like they are not happening. Because they are. My concern is about everyday Bermudians and the quality of life that we have here.

POLITICAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, with the few minutes that I have left, Mr. Speaker, I want to just switch topics for one second, because I listened last night. Well, obviously, I had just gotten out of the hospital, so I was not able to attend Sir John's funeral, but I watched it. And all of the tributes . . . I watched the proceedings in here on Tuesday. All of the tributes actually painted a really good picture for me, because I first met Sir John back in probably the late 1980s, but I did not know him, you know, like that. I have met him. And I listened to, I think it was Magic [102.7] last night, that played a couple of the interviews that he had had with Glenn Blakeney. And one thing that stood out to me amongst what happened here, what happened at his service, and as well as on that radio programme, being able to hear him, himself, say the things that he said. It was very clear that he cared about the country, and he cared about us, and I am grateful for that. I took a lot of good nuggets from what I heard him say.

So, I want to talk a little bit about political accountability, because I think it segues right from Sir John's interview that I heard last night, and all that was said. I want to speak to this issue, which is beyond party lines, Mr. Speaker. It is beyond our ideology, beyond the daily back and forth that happens in this House. It concerns the very character of our country, at a time when the world around us is becoming a whole lot more strained, more divided, and more unpredictable. We are living through a period of profound geopolitical tensions. Nations are hardening their positions, conflicts are escalating, the tone of global discourse is growing sharper. I do not think that anyone has seen it this sharp as we currently are living through it. And while Bermuda might be small, we are certainly not insulated from all of what is happening.

The pressures of a shifting world, Mr. Speaker, are reaching our shores. Economically, socially and also emotionally. And in times like this, societies often reveal their best and their worst. And we must be honest, the global climate of polarisation is becoming . . . and it is beginning to seep into our own community. We see it in how easily suspicion replaces understanding, and how frustration replaces compassion. But Bermuda cannot afford to fracture. We are too connected. We are too interconnected. We actually care about each other, even though sometimes we do not act like we do.

An Hon. Member: I care about you.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: If we are able to withstand the pressures of this moment, we have to reaffirm certain fundamental truths. And that is, our responsibility to care for one another, Mr. Speaker, is not conditional.

It does not depend on race. It does not depend, and ought not depend on socioeconomic status. It does not depend on whether someone agrees with us politically. It depends only on our shared humanity and our shared home, this Island that we all are in here and we say that we love.

Mr. Speaker, we often say that Bermudians are suffering. But saying it, Mr. Speaker, is not enough. We have to get to a point where we are actually feeling what our country is experiencing. We have to allow ourselves to be moved by the struggles of our people, not the statistics, not the headlines, but in our lived realities. Because sometimes we can get up in our ivory towers and forget where we came from. A lesson that all of us can take from Sir John, because he did not forget where he came from, where he had come from.

Families, as we all know, are under strain. Our young people are searching for direction and looking for direction, certainly, from us. Our seniors are increasingly feeling the weight of the isolation that they are living every single day. And workers are stretched thinly by the cost of living.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a time for political posturing. It is a moment for moral courage. And a part of that courage, perhaps the hardest part for us, is the courage to hold each other accountable. Not just across the aisle, but within our own political parties, within our own ranks, and within our own comfort zones. Accountability is not an attack. It is an obligation that we have to each and every person that have marked that "X" next to our names when they went in that polling booth. We owe it to the best of ourselves [and] to our constituents, who are the people that actually put us here. They did not send us to this House to defend personalities or to protect political tribes. They sent us here to uphold principles, to safeguard the public good and to challenge one another when we fall short. Mr. Speaker, if we cannot hold each other accountable in this Chamber and within our own parties, even if we are going the wrong direction . . . but we have to have the courage to stand up and say it is wrong. If we cannot do that, Mr. Speaker, how can we possibly ask the country to trust us, and trust us for real?

If we cannot demand integrity, we cannot demand transparency and humility from those closest to us politically, then we risk becoming the very thing we claim to stand against. We must put aside the instinct to score political points and instead choose to build bridges. We must resist the global tide of polarisation and hold fast the values that have always defined Bermuda at its best: respect, empathy, community, and, yes, accountability. Because the world is shifting, Mr. Speaker, and if we do not anchor ourselves in unity and principle, we risk being swept into the same currents that are pulling other nations apart.

Mr. Speaker, I pray that we choose differently. Let us choose to protect each other. Let us choose to lead with compassion rather than with division. Let us choose to act, not out of fear, but out of conviction that Bermuda's strength has always come from its people and their willingness, Mr. Speaker, to stand together. So, Mr. Speaker, as I take my seat, I urge every Bermudian, every Member, to reflect on the kind of society we want to be in this moment of global uncertainty. Let us be committed to being a country that does not fracture under pressure, but instead rises to meet it with dignity, with unity, with care and the courage to hold ourselves and each other to the highest standard.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Tucker.

Opposition Leader, would you like to make your contribution at this time?

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon.

The Speaker: Thank you. Before you start—

MP Famous, would you take the Chair for a minute?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Hey, Mr. Speaker. Hey.

The Speaker: You can start, Mr. Opposition Leader, it's time.

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

[Mr. Christopher Famous, Acting Speaker, in the Chair]

The Acting Speaker: Oh, yes, point of order!

[Laughter]

HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUMS RISING COSTS

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, I think one of the things that has actually come up a couple of times today—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Good afternoon, Mr. Acting Speaker, MP Famous.

It is important that we point out what priorities are. Because several times, MP Cannonier has risen to his feet and talked about health care and mergers and acquisitions of pharmacies and doctors' offices and what that impact would have on our community.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that was not . . . It started off as a warning before it happened. But now it sinks in as the reality. And not everybody in this country works for the government. In private sector, a lot of people with private insurance have seen premiums continue to rise at a time that these mergers are happening. And MP Cannonier has pointed out he understands that these mergers happen a lot of times because of what our economy is doing at the moment, what our population is doing. With a shrinking population, less customers, potentially you are going to see these mergers. But Mr. Acting Speaker, his warning was on what the impact was going to be on our people. And the Honourable Premier pointed out that he was actually going to do something about it. Several times.

Mr. Acting Speaker, that was quite some time ago. And the impact is real on real lives. The problem with that is that people make decisions based off of what those circumstances are. When MP Cannonier talks about the increase for him and his family, look at that across the community. Some people are in a position to be able to afford those increases. But many others are not. And with that, some of our citizens have made the decision that because of that increased cost of health care, as one of the negatives within the cost of living, that they cannot live here anymore. They want to go somewhere else where they feel that they have access to health care and affordable health care. We know that this is one of the factors that is causing people to make those choices. Nobody in this Chamber wants people to make those choices for that reason.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is the reason that the One Bermuda Alliance put forward that we should put regulations in place. When we say “regulations,” that does not mean that you automatically tell that insurance company that you cannot raise your premiums. But they should have to justify why the premium is going up the percentage that they want it to go up, and what is that going to mean? Is this [sheer] greed, so that they can increase the amount of money they are giving to their shareholders off the backs of the people in Bermuda? Or is it because increased costs, within the medical field, changes in the community? But that should be a full analysis that is gone through before they make that decision, because it impacts the lives of our people.

So, I am thankful to hear the Minister of Health talk about the Health Council, and what that communication will look like, and the communication with the Ministry and the Minister, but I did not hear anything in there that talked about the teeth that will be needed. Because, Mr. Acting Speaker, when the Honourable Minister of Health tried to stand up to this very large insurance company, they paused for a second and then ignored her. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, the Minister talked about, you have to be very careful in this kind of change. I agree with her. But she went on to talk about the unintended consequences that might come about by telling them, potentially, you are going to restrict them from raising their premiums whenever they feel like it.

But, Mr. Acting Speaker, those consequences have already begun. Remember, they took over the doctor's offices, they took over the pharmacies, and then they merged. And then they started to make changes to who you could go to as a pharmacy. And then they started to tell those doctor's offices that you need to speed up how quickly you are meeting with your patients. Now, it is an assembly line, because that is what big business thinks about, not the individual and their health. That is the danger in a community of our size. Because as you move in that direction, it changes from how our community used to work with business. Once we just become numbers, and that is where this is heading, and that is where the Honourable MP Canonier was pointing out, that this is why you need to actually step in. This is the opportunity for a government to make a change that actually can help the people over business.

Because now you see doctors opting out. Because if you are a doctor who actually cares about your patients, the assembly line version does not work for you. And we are already seeing them send out messages to say, you can go to this hospital, but not that hospital, if you have to have overseas care. So, look at the restrictions that start to come in play as they get bigger. So, the same way that the regulators in place have to look at the full picture and analysis when they are dealing with BELCO, that is the same concept that we were referring to. They should have to justify how

they get that price increase. Because, Mr. Acting Speaker, 18 per cent one year, then 18 per cent the next year, there is no possible way that that is the way the number works. Because in any other industry—restaurants cannot all of a sudden increase the prices by 18 per cent. And, Mr. Acting Speaker, we know BELCO cannot do it. But where we are with this, this is health care.

So not only, as MP Tucker just talked about, are we actually having a crisis on how we are providing our health care, the cost of that health care is increasing without any indication that it is ever going to stop, or that there is even anybody looking at how they can restrict it. Once again, I am thankful that the Minister is talking about the conversation with the council. But if we do not actually have a way to say to these insurance companies, *this is not working* . . . if we get to the point where they get to tell you which doctor you get to go to, which pharmacy you get to [go to], which medicine you are allowed to have, that is true haves and have-nots. And I know there is nobody in this Chamber who is advocating for that. But, Mr. Acting Speaker, that is the line that we are on right now.

And I am asking, when the Honourable Primer said that it was going to be a priority, multiple years ago, why is it that in this session, with very little on the agenda, it is not already on the table? It needs to be a priority. Because I am talking about the monopolies in health care, but we also have monopolies [with] our food. We have to understand, because of the changes in our country, because of the changes in our population, and the mergers have happened, and acquisitions of multiple grocery stores and multiple health insurance, pharmacies, doctors' offices, we are now putting our health and our food in the hands of a small group of people. And they get to determine, in the future, how we live—or if we live.

This must be a priority. And I am asking this Honourable Premier to make it a priority now and not wait to put it on the plate of the next Premier.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Honourable Premier, you have the floor.

PLP THRONE SPEECH AGENDA

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Acting Speaker, I hear a lot of sound and fury from the Opposition. The Honourable Minister of Health has given her comments on this particular matter, and the Honourable Members will know that governments . . . it is easy to be in opposition to talk about things, but governments must go through a policy-making process. And the Minister of Health has officially addressed the issue of the matters in which we are advancing.

But the thing important to note is they are working on many particular things with health care. Because I do not hear the same sound and fury from the Opposition worried about making sure that we cover the 12 per cent of people in this country who are uninsured, as well, which are other items. So, I accept that there are a number of particular items that maybe want to be their priority. But the Government has set out its matters inside of its Throne Speech and are working through all of them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to . . . Mr. Acting Speaker, okay. They will go ahead and say nothing, Mr. Acting Speaker, and the record, as I easily reflected earlier, says a whole bunch of different . . . But that is fine for them to make their particular comments.

Mr. Acting Speaker, I just want to address one thing, and it is just a small point, but I think it is important, that when Honourable Members opposite get up with sound and fury and talk about the rules and the laws, that they actually take the time to be learned up on these particular matters, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

And before I go there, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, I just want to stay on the matter related to health care, stay on the matters that are related to priorities and stay on the matters that are related to the matters of which the Government is advancing. I think that it is particularly important to recognise that there are a number of varied priorities. The Minister of Health has spoken about what is happening on matters related to health care but let us look at what has been delivered by the Minister responsible for Housing, which is something that was a Throne Speech initiative, and that is going to build significant houses. The Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors today, who has tabled regulations that are going to expand childcare access inside this country. The matters that are related to the Minister of Public Works, who is expanding road provision and other particular matters in this country. And certainly, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, the continued work of the Minister of Health, expanding health care access, and making sure that we can deliver universal health care.

So, from these particular perspectives, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, we are going to continue to press forward on our agenda, and it is our desire and intention to make sure that the things which are addressed inside of our Throne Speech are brought forward. There is a major piece of legislation that was tabled earlier today. I am not going to speak on that. I am going to allow the Attorney General, who sits in another place, to be the first to address the country on these things. But there are a number of matters which are priorities, and there are a number of matters which are going forward.

Mr. [Acting] Speaker, allow me to say this, as I will just go back to my final points. And I think that it is important that Members, when they accuse persons of violating House [Standing Orders], actually read what House [Standing Orders] say. And I am going to refer you, Mr. Acting Speaker, to Standing Order

17(9)(a)(viii), and it is very simple. And it says that: "[The] Minister or Junior Minister may take an oral question as noticed to be answered orally at the next day of meeting, but where any reserved answer requires a lengthy statement, the statement shall be given under Statements by the Minister or Junior Minister at the next day of meeting."

The Honourable Member put forward an oral question that required a long response, and I followed Standing Orders and gave him that response, and the Honourable Member was clearly able to ask questions on that, which he so did. And so, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, that is the thing.

Now, the final thing that I will say to the Members of the Opposition in following on matters related to health care.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, my goodness, what is going on? They do not like Standing Orders now, Mr. Acting Speaker? Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Let us keep on going, Mr. [Acting] Speaker. The final thing which I would say.

Mr. Jarion Richardson Point of order, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Mr. Premier, do you recognise the point of order?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Using insulting language]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order. Thank you, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

A number of the comments the Honourable Premier has made have been insulting. And insulting language is against Standing Orders. So, just since he raised it, I will raise it back. If he could just conduct himself in a Premier-like manner.

An Hon. Member: What!

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Acting Speaker, unfortunately, the Honourable Member has nothing to come back with, so he will come with some . . . I do not even know what that is.

But let me continue, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

[Laughter]

Mr. Jarion Richardson I thought I'd help. It is called a point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: What's your point of order?

The Acting Speaker: Do you recognise the point of order?

Hon. E. David Burt: What is his point of order?

The Acting Speaker: Yes, what is your point of order, Honourable Member?

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Jarion Richardson: He's insulting. He's insulting, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Is that in the Standing Orders?

Mr. Jarion Richardson Yes, absolutely.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, allow me to continue, Mr. Acting Speaker.

The final thing that I will say is that I enjoy the sound and fury that comes from the Opposition benches.

The Acting Speaker: I could not hear you. Say it again.

Hon. E. David Burt: But I will also—

I enjoy the sound and fury that may come from the Opposition benches. But I will say, as I did the last time where they raised matters of health care, I hope that they keep that energy.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: Because when the Bill does come to the House—

An Hon. Member: Oh, yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —I do not want them to go around and say: *Oh my goodness, you are going to, you know, do this and the penalties are too harsh and we do not want doctors and insurance companies to go ahead and submit information so we can actually make principled decision-making and actual decision-making* as they did last time.

So, I just remind them, Mr. Acting Speaker, for them to keep that energy. Because when it comes, I am sure they will find a reason to say: *Well, but . . .*

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: So the reality is, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, that when these particular matters come, I sincerely hope that they will keep their energy. Nonetheless, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, I wish everyone a wonderful weekend, and I think that is all the business of which I have for today.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier. Honourable Members, we will see you next time. Thank you for an enjoyable day. Thank you to the listening public.

And the House is now adjourned.

[Gavel]

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: The adjournment is still on.

The Acting Speaker: Sorry. Adjourned until the next meeting.

Mr. Scott Pearman: [The] 10th of July.

The Acting Speaker: The 10th of July.

Mr. Scott Pearman: At 10:00 am.

The Acting Speaker: The 10th of July.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The House is what?

The Acting Speaker: The House is adjourned until the 10th of July.

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

[At 4:42 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 10 July 2026.]

[This page intentionally left blank.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
10 JULY 2026
10:13 AM**

Sitting Number 39 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
The Clerk will now lead us in prayers.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Good morning.

An Hon. Member: Good morning.

The Speaker: [Good] morning.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 12 June and 26 June 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from the sittings of the 12th of June and the 26th of June have been circulated.

Are there any amendments required?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: No amendments. The Minutes will be printed as confirmed.

[Minutes of 12 June and 26 June 2026 confirmed.]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: We have been informed by the following Members that they will be absent today: Minister Lightbourne; Government Whip, MP Tyrrell; MP Famous; MP Wayne Furbert; and MP Michael Fahy all have indicated their absence today.

BERMUDA OMBUDSMAN ANNUAL REPORT 2025

The Speaker: Members, I have received the Annual Ombudsman's Report, which covers the period of 1 January to 31 December 2025.

This report is submitted in accordance with section 24(1) and (3) of the Ombudsman Act 2004.

Thank you.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: We have four such Papers today. The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier.

**SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) FOR
FINANCIAL YEAR 2026/27**

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

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to the powers conferred by section 96 of the Constitution, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Supplementary Estimate \(No. 1\) for financial year 2026/27](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second Paper this morning is the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. Minister.

**HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the [Human Rights Commission Annual Report 2025](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next [Paper] is in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport. Minister.

CIVIL AVIATION (AIR TRANSPORT LICENSING) REGULATIONS 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the [Civil Aviation \(Air Transport Licensing\) Regulations 2026](#), as made by the Minister responsible for Aviation, in exercise of the powers conferred by section 18 of the Civil Aviation (Air Transport Licensing) Act 2007.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second [Paper] is also yours, Minister. Would you like to present that one?

TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEWOOD BERMUDA) ORDER 2020 REVOCATION NOTICE 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Tourism Investment \(Rosewood Bermuda\) Order 2020 Revocation Notice 2026](#), as made by the Minister responsible for Tourism, in exercise of the power conferred by section 6A(1) of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That brings us to a close of the Papers and Communications for today.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: This morning we have . . . the first Statement is from the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Sport *[sic]* . . . and Seniors, rather.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

FAMILY PRESERVATION TIER II PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Good morning.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House on the progress of the [Family Preservation Tier II Programme](#) an initiative launched in alignment with Government's 2024 commitment to strengthen supports within the social and youth development sectors.

Mr. Speaker, as part of this commitment, the Department of Child and Family Services was tasked with reintroducing an intensive, community-based model of family intervention, historically known as CMIT [Coordinated Multidisciplinary Intervention Team]. This enhanced model, now formally established as Family Preservation Tier II, operates as a specialised extension of the department's existing Family Preservation Team. Its purpose is clear: to provide acute, high frequency intervention to families whose circumstances place their children at elevated risk of future abuse or neglect.

Mr. Speaker, the need for this programme is grounded in clear and compelling data. Thirty per cent of families served by Family Preservation were assessed as being at high risk for future child abuse or neglect. Family Strengths and Needs Assessments conducted during this period revealed significant concerns in parenting skills, coping skills and mental health, resource management and basic needs, and substance use. Mr. Speaker, these findings mirror broader departmental trends, where parenting capacity and coping skills have consistently emerged as the most significant areas of need among families receiving services.

Mr. Speaker, families with these profiles require intensive intervention, defined by increased frequency of contact, in-home coaching, and community-based support. Research and practice both confirm that when contact increases, assessment accuracy improves, intervention becomes more effective, and the timeframe for reducing risk shortens.

Mr. Speaker, the Tier II programme aims to empower families to overcome adversity by addressing both immediate crises and long-term needs. The model focuses on building resilience, strengthening protective factors, and fostering meaningful community connections. Through direct one-to-one support, in home coaching, and community-based services, the programme provides practical assistance at a grassroots level. Families benefit from strengthened functioning and cohesion, enhanced parenting capacity through education, modelling and coaching, and improved advocacy and access to essential community resources such as housing, financial assistance, health care, education, and employment. The programme is designed to reduce risk factors contributing to child protection involvement and to promote sustainable change, improved coping, and long-term independence.

Mr. Speaker, staff onboarding for Family Preservation Tier II was completed in February 2026. All team members have undergone comprehensive orientation training to ensure they are fully equipped to deliver the level of service required for high-risk families. Training has included Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Families, SCARS, mandatory reporting and investigation skills, legislation training, court report writing, strategies for working with high-risk families, hoarding assessment and intervention, professional

department and standards, activities of daily living, and structured approaches to in-home intervention. Ongoing in-service training will continue as the programme matures, with regular reviews of what is working well and areas requiring improvement.

Mr. Speaker, at present, 10 families have been referred to the Tier II programme from both the Family Preservation and Foster Care teams, with additional referrals currently being processed. Early feedback indicates that families are engaging well with the model and that workers are advancing in building rapport with families to address complex needs through structured, high contact intervention.

Mr. Speaker, the Family Preservation Tier II Programme represents a significant step forward in our commitment to safeguarding Bermuda's children and strengthening families. By investing in intensive, community-based intervention, we are breaking cycles of risk, building resilience, and supporting families in achieving long-term stability and well-being. This Government remains steadfast in its dedication to ensuring that every child in Bermuda is safe, supported, and given the opportunity to thrive.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement is in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to continue with your second Statement?

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to submit to this Honourable House the [Annual Report of the Human Rights Commission](#) for the year ending 31 December 2025.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission has a statutory remit to protect and promote human rights under the Human Rights Act 1981. The Commission's mandate involves education, the promotion of principles of equality and non-discrimination, the investigation of alleged contraventions of the Act, and the resolution of complaints of discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, as Bermuda's National Human Rights Institution, the Commission plays an important role in protecting and promoting human rights while supporting the effective implementation of international human rights standards. Guided by the United Nations Paris Principles, the Commission carries out its work through complaint handling, education, outreach, advocacy, policy engagement, and advice to government and stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission serves both as a complaints-handling authority and as a public resource. Through its officers, the Commission provides guidance to individuals, employers, service providers, land-

lords, educational institutions, community organisations, and the government regarding rights and obligations under Bermuda's human rights framework.

The Commission furthers its objectives by

- receiving and assessing complaints of discrimination;
- investigating alleged contraventions of the Human Rights Act;
- providing voluntary mediation services;
- referring appropriate matters to the Human Rights Tribunal;
- conducting education and outreach initiatives;
- participating in policy reviews and consultations;
- providing guidance to support compliance with human rights obligations; and
- promoting understanding of human rights across Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, included in the Annual Report you will note that during the 2025 calendar year, the Commission received 215 intakes, consisting of complaints, queries, and special programme applications, representing a significant increase from the previous reporting year. Of these, 96 were complaints, 118 were queries, and one was for a Special Programme application. The most [commonly] identified protected grounds were sex at 19 per cent, disability at 18 per cent, and ethnic or national origins at 14 per cent. These figures continue to highlight the areas where members of our community most frequently experience concerns about unequal treatment.

Within the protected areas of discrimination identified by complainants, employment-related discrimination accounted for 31 per cent of reported concerns, followed by discrimination relating to goods, facilities and services at 17 per cent, and workplace harassment at 13 per cent. Overall, 70 per cent of intakes concerned employment and workplace-related matters.

The Commission conducted 24 investigations during the reporting period and referred nine matters to the Human Rights Tribunal, demonstrating a continued increase in matters progressing through the Commission's formal complaint-handling process.

Mr. Speaker, a major milestone during the reporting year was the publication of the report entitled "Disability Inclusion in Bermuda: Findings & Recommendations from a National Consultation." This report was informed by extensive consultation with more than 300 residents and was grounded in the principle of *Nothing About Us, Without Us*. The report provides a framework of recommendations to advance disability inclusion in Bermuda and to support implementation of Bermuda's obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The consultation revealed that nearly one in two respondents with disabilities reported experiencing discrimination or harassment and highlighted the need

for stronger accessibility, accountability, representation, and coordinated national action.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission also strengthened its public education and outreach efforts during 2025, delivering 71 education, outreach and advocacy activities, including presentations, consultations, workshops, community discussions, and public awareness initiatives. The Commission continued to collaborate with a wide range of organisations, including Ageing and Disability Services, Bermuda Is Love, Beyond Inclusion, Vision Bermuda, the Bermuda National Library, Imagine Bermuda, OUTBermuda, and many other community partners.

The Commission further expanded its public engagement through the formal integration of social media into its communications strategy. Between March and December 2025, the Commission's digital platforms generated more than 194,000 views, reached over 51,600 individuals, and recorded approximately 5,400 interactions, helping to make information on human rights more accessible to the public.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission also represented Bermuda internationally through participation in the Caribbean Disability Network Conference in Barbados under the theme "Breaking Barriers: Advancing Inclusive Education for All Abilities." This engagement strengthened regional collaboration and allowed Bermuda to share lessons learned from its Disability Inclusion Report while contributing to broader discussions on accessibility and disability rights throughout the Caribbean.

The Commission continued its advisory role to Government and stakeholders, participating in approximately 20 policy reviews and consultations on matters including constitutional reform, disability rights, age discrimination, pay transparency, HIV criminalisation, and human rights protections.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Human Rights Commission for its dedication to the advancement of human rights in Bermuda and for stewarding the Commission's mandate with integrity and excellence.

In accordance with section 30A of the Human Rights Act 1981, I am pleased to have laid before this Honourable House the Human Rights Commission Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2025.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, IMPLICATIONS ON ACCESS TO OVERSEAS MEDICAL CARE

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address a matter of significant importance affecting Bermudians who require essential medical treatment overseas but find themselves unable to travel because they are subject to [international travel restrictions](#), commonly referred to as "stop lists" which may arise from a variety of circumstances.

Mr. Speaker, while Bermuda provides high-quality health care locally, certain specialised treatments, including advanced cancer care, cardiac interventions, organ transplantation, and complex surgeries, often require referral to specialist institutions overseas. When an individual is prohibited from entering the country where that treatment is available because of a past criminal conviction, the consequences can be profound and may directly affect their health, well-being, and quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, these consequences are not limited to those seeking medical treatment themselves. International travel restrictions may also prevent an individual from accompanying a spouse, parent, child, or other loved one who must travel overseas for urgent or life-saving medical care. For many patients, particularly children, the elderly, or those facing serious illness, the presence of a trusted family member provides essential emotional support, assists with medical decision-making, and helps navigate complex health care systems. Being unable to accompany a loved one during one of the most difficult periods of their life can place additional emotional strain on both the patient and their family and may result in significant practical and financial challenges.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that the public understands the nature of these restrictions. Entry into any foreign country is a privilege and is governed by the laws of that sovereign nation. For example, the United States may refuse entry, in some cases permanently, to individuals whose criminal history renders them inadmissible under US immigration law, including certain controlled substance offences and other criminal offences. These determinations are made solely by US immigration authorities based on an individual's personal circumstances. They are not decisions made by the Government of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the public should also be aware that a conviction which is regarded as "spent" under Bermuda's laws may nevertheless continue to be considered by US immigration authorities when determining admissibility. The Government of Bermuda cannot overturn, influence, or intervene in decisions regarding an individual's eligibility to enter another country.

Mr. Speaker, for those affected, there is a process to apply for a travel waiver. However, this is a discretionary process that can take many months, and in some cases more than a year. While an interview may be expedited in exceptional circumstances, the required security and background screening must still be completed. Consequently, a travel waiver should not,

and cannot, be relied upon for urgent or emergency medical travel.

Mr. Speaker, when a patient requiring urgent treatment cannot travel to the destination where the most appropriate care is available, alternative overseas treatment options must be explored. However, arranging treatment in another jurisdiction can result in significant delays, increased logistical complexity, and substantially higher costs, all at a time when timely access to care may be critical. In some circumstances, alternative treatment options may simply not be available within the timeframe required.

Mr. Speaker, this issue serves as a powerful reminder that the choices we make today can have consequences that extend far beyond the immediate moment. A criminal conviction may not only affect employment opportunities, educational prospects, or international travel for business and leisure; it may also limit access to life-saving medical treatment, prevent someone from supporting a loved one during a serious illness, and create barriers at times when family presence matters most.

Mr. Speaker, the decisions made in youth or early [adulthood], often without consideration of their long-term implications, can continue to affect an individual decades later. A single poor decision may have lasting consequences for one's health, family responsibilities, and ability to respond to life's unforeseen challenges. Mr. Speaker, I therefore encourage all residents, and particularly our young people, to carefully consider the long-term consequences of their actions. Protecting one's future means preserving opportunities—not only the opportunity to work, study, and travel, but also the ability to access essential health care when needed and to stand beside those we love during their greatest time of need.

Mr. Speaker, the Government will continue to support residents in accessing medically necessary care wherever possible. However, we must recognise that decisions made by foreign governments regarding entry are beyond Bermuda's control. Protecting one's future ability to travel internationally for health care, family responsibilities, and other important life events is, in many respects, a matter of personal responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

That brings us to a close . . . sorry, I should have turned the page.

Members, we have one more Statement this morning, and that's from the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister, you can present your Statement for us, please.

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

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND BERMUDA JOB CONNECT: ADVANCING BERMUDA'S WORKFORCE

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update on [significant workforce development initiatives](#) that continue to strengthen Bermuda's labour market and advance this Government's commitment to creating meaningful opportunities for Bermudians.

These initiatives include the continued implementation of the Youth Employment Strategy through our Summer Employment Programmes and the successful launch and ongoing enhancement of Bermuda Job Connect. These initiatives demonstrate the Government's commitment to ensuring that Bermudians have access to the education, skills, practical experience and employment opportunities necessary to participate fully in Bermuda's economy.

Mr. Speaker, the future strength of Bermuda's economy depends upon the strength of its workforce. For that reason, this Government continues to invest strategically in programmes that prepare Bermudians for employment, support employers in developing local talent, and create sustainable career pathways that respond to both current and emerging labour market needs. During the past quarter, the Department of Workforce Development successfully delivered several significant initiatives while simultaneously relocating its operations to Bermuda College and maintaining uninterrupted services to the public. This level of operational delivery reflects the dedication, professionalism and resilience of the department's staff and our valued partners across both the public and private sectors.

Mr. Speaker, the Youth Employment Strategy remains one of the department's flagship initiatives and continues to play a vital role in preparing Bermuda's young people for successful participation in the workforce. More than a summer employment programme, the Strategy provides structured pathways from education into employment by combining practical work experience, professional development, mentoring and career planning.

Planning for the 2026 Youth Employment Programme commenced months before the first student entered the workplace. Departmental officers coordinated employer recruitment, student registration, application assessments, placement matching, employment contracts, payroll processing, orientation sessions and ongoing engagement with students, parents and employers.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that the department successfully placed 174 students into meaningful work experience opportunities during the 2026 programme. This includes

- 102 college and university students participating in the Summer Employment Programme; and

- 72 high school students participating in the Summer Internship Programme.

These placements were made possible through the continued support of government ministries, public authorities, educational institutions and private-sector employers who remain committed to investing in Bermuda's future workforce. Their willingness to provide mentorship, supervision and practical workplace experience continues to strengthen opportunities for our young people while building the next generation of Bermudian professionals.

Mr. Speaker, the department recognises that meaningful employment begins with meaningful preparation. This year's orientation programme was delivered under the theme "Level Up: From [Participant] to Professional." Students participated in structured sessions designed to prepare them for workplace success through training in

- professionalism;
- workplace expectations;
- effective communication;
- teamwork and collaboration;
- ethics and accountability;
- [personal] branding;
- financial literacy;
- career planning; and
- developing a growth mindset.

These sessions encouraged participants to view themselves not simply as just [summer] employees, but as emerging professionals beginning their career journeys.

Throughout the summer, students have continued to receive career coaching and professional development opportunities designed to reinforce workplace learning and encourage continual personal growth. In partnership with the Office of Youth Affairs, programme participants also attended the National Youth Conference where they engaged in workshops focusing on leadership development, public speaking, civic engagement, innovation, media communication and problem-solving. These experiences complement workplace learning by equipping our young people with the confidence, resilience and transferable skills necessary to thrive throughout their careers.

Mr. Speaker, preparing young Bermudians for the future of work also requires investment in emerging skills. Accordingly, the department expanded its employability training by introducing courses in Artificial Intelligence for [personal] and professional productivity, workplace communication, emotional intelligence and resilience.

Through our partnership with MASC, participants also benefited from practical workshops designed to strengthen workplace readiness, communication, emotional control under pressure and the personal habits necessary to sustain long-term employment. These initiatives reflect the department's commitment to ensuring that Bermuda's workforce is prepared not

only for today's labour market but also for the changing demands of tomorrow's economy.

The success of the Youth Employment Programme demonstrates what can be achieved when government, employers, educators and community partners work collaboratively toward a common objective. Every student placed represents another Bermudian gaining practical experience, developing confidence and taking an important step toward long-term employment and career success.

Mr. Speaker, while investing in Bermuda's youth remains a priority, Government also recognises the importance of modernising how Bermudians connect with employment opportunities throughout every stage of their careers. For that reason, the department successfully launched Bermuda Job Connect on 6 April 2026, replacing the former Bermuda Job Board with a comprehensive digital workforce platform designed to support job seekers, employers, educators and workforce partners through one integrated system.

Unlike its predecessor, Bermuda Job Connect is not simply an online vacancy board. It represents a significant transformation in the delivery of workforce development services, providing career planning tools, employability resources, labour market information, online learning opportunities and enhanced employer recruitment capabilities.

The platform enables individuals to create professional profiles, explore career pathways, access training opportunities and manage employment applications, while employers benefit from improved recruitment tools, organisation profiles, [applicant] management features and workforce data that supports more informed hiring decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the successful implementation of Bermuda Job Connect occurred during one of the department's busiest operational periods. Despite competing priorities, the department successfully delivered this important digital transformation through careful planning, collaboration and an unwavering commitment to public [service].

Recognising that technology alone does not guarantee success, the department invested significant effort in supporting employers and job seekers throughout the transition. The team worked closely with the platform developers to provide employer onboarding, technical assistance, platform demonstrations, workshops and one-on-one consultations. Weekly meetings with developers enabled continuous refinement of the platform and ensured that user feedback informed ongoing system improvements.

Mr. Speaker, early results demonstrate encouraging adoption by Bermuda's workforce and employer community. Since the launch of the new site there have been

- 1,199 users registered on the [platform];
- 80 organisations were successfully onboarded;
- 167 employment opportunities were actively advertised;

- 1,509 job applications were submitted;
- 442 active job seekers were utilising the platform;
- more than 2,600 Career Card views were recorded;
- 130 online learning courses were in progress; and
- users collectively recorded [over] 16,500 hours of employability engagement.

The department will continue to enhance the platform by expanding employer participation, strengthening workforce [analytics], increasing online learning opportunities and further integrating apprenticeship and career development services into one seamless workforce ecosystem.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the director, management team and dedicated staff of the Department of Workforce Development for their professionalism, innovation and commitment to serving the people of Bermuda. I also thank our employer partners, educational institutions, industry representatives and community organisations whose collaboration continues to make these achievements possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers for this morning.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.
The next—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: We are starting the Question Period now, and I am going to—

[Crosstalk]

PREMIER'S QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We will do the Premier's Questions now, and the first question this morning is from the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

QUESTION 1: POPULATION REQUIREMENT FOR BERMUDA'S SUSTAINABILITY

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Premier, demographic decline and a shrinking workforce, continued emigration, and a birth rate below replacement level represents Bermuda's greatest long-term challenge. What population does the Government believe Bermuda requires to sustain our economy, health care system, public services, and what measurable strategy has been adopted to achieve this objective?

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

In regard to the Opposition Leader's question, I cannot give him a figure off the top of my head. I know that there have been reports on this that were previously done. I think they were tabled in this House and debated in this House, so I would ask the Honourable Member to refer to those reports.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary. Would the Honourable Premier tell us that he does not have a target population for Bermuda to sustain its economy going forward?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, that's not what I said.

What I said is that we have done reports on this particular matter which have been tabled in this House, and I would ask the Honourable Member to review those reports. He asked me for a figure off the top of my head, and I am not going to give him a figure off the top of my head. There was research, there was work that was done on that, tabled in this House, and debated in this House.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

So, the Honourable Premier and Finance Minister is not, off the top of his head, able to tell us what population Bermuda needs in order to sustain itself with its economy, considering what the major issue we have with a death rate that is above our population repopulation, and with the emigration that [we are] continuing to have, this has to be one of the major things that he would be thinking about. So, he should have a number that he could at least tell the population and the people in this House.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

The Speaker: Been reports done.

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

I am not entirely certain if there was a question in that, but the answer is the same as I gave before. There was . . . the Honourable Member started in re-

gard to a question related to population, et cetera, and all the rest. I had said that the Government has published reports and that those reports were debated in the Honourable House. The Honourable Member can go ahead and refer to that.

The Speaker: Thank you.
New question?

QUESTION 2: ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION

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

Honourable Premier, throughout your premiership you have spoken about economic diversification, yet Bermuda's economy remains overwhelmingly dependent on international business. Can the Honourable Premier tell Bermudians what sector or industry the Government believes will drive Bermuda's economy over the next 20 years outside of international business?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Government debated an entire Economic Development Strategy inside of this Honourable House, and that particular matter was approved by this Honourable House. That Economic Development Strategy lays out five particular pillars, deals with strengthening what we have and expanding what we have, and I will ask the Honourable Member to refer to that document which was debated and passed and approved in this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary. So, would the Honourable Premier tell the House and the people of Bermuda whether he believes that any diversification in our economy has worked under his administration?

Hon. E. David Burt: The answer, Mr. Speaker, is unquestionably yes.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, could the Premier give the Honourable House and the public of Bermuda any indication of what that diversification is and what positives that he can speak to, other than international business, [which] continues to be the pillar that is running everything in this country?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the growth in financial services and expansion of financial services is important. The Economic Development Strategy speaks to building on what we have and then expanding into other places, Mr. Speaker.

So, let's talk about economic diversification and what has taken place. We now recognise there's a \$100 million project in Southside, recognising from Google from the very beginning—

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: —where we spoke about the fact that we could have international and a technology part, Mr. Speaker.

On matters related to financial services, the diversification of the financial services landscape, Mr. Speaker, with additional things which are coming which were laid inside of the Economic Development Strategy.

On matters related for tourism, we have the largest tourism investment in this country's history. Significant additional matters that are related to tourism investment orders and investments into the country, Mr. Speaker.

The Economic Development Strategy lays out, we build on what we have, we also go to other sectors, and I think there is demonstrable progress in that. And if the Honourable Member will not accept that a \$100 million investment from Google on technology matters and other things on subsea cables is not diversification, which was clearly stated in the Economic Development Strategy, then I am not entirely certain what qualifies for him.

The Speaker: Third question.

QUESTION 3: BERMUDIAN HOUSEHOLD PURCHASING POWER

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

Honourable Premier, your Government frequently highlights increases in pension, financial assistance, and other benefits as they increase the safety net that the middle class is falling into. Has the Government measured whether the average Bermudian household has greater purchasing power today than when he first became the Premier?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that wages are rising faster than inflation. That is what we have seen. We have seen median incomes come up. We have seen all the rest. We have seen the measures of which we have taken to increase purchasing power for persons as well. So, it is important to note that over the time period that is what we have seen, Mr. Speaker.

In addition, whether it is from the public sector workers, in addition, whether it is the matters related to the reduction of taxes and making sure persons, the average Bermudian, Mr. Speaker, over the time which we have been in office, have paid \$8,000 less in taxes. That is an average Bermudian. An average family means more than \$15,000 less in taxes than we had when we came into office. We continue to make sure,

whether it is pensions, whether it is boosting income levels for financial assistance, whether it is making sure that we have additional benefits that are available, whether it is expansion of child care, so that persons who are making up to \$130,000 have access to assistance in child care. We have made sure that we have supported persons across the board, Mr. Speaker, and on that we are going to continue to support persons across the board.

An Hon. Member: Minimum wage.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, let us not forget the minimum wage and let us not also forget, Mr. Speaker, that we are doing another pension increase today. That is what we are doing, Mr. Speaker. It is about continuing to build on the record that this Government has established.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

So, Mr. Speaker, outside of the people who have the ability to work in international business, the people in Bermuda that the Premier continues to refer to that he is giving more benefits to, are they the ones who are supposed to look at those increases and whether they match the increase in the cost of living? Are they able to say that they can survive better now—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: —compared to when the Premier took over—

An Hon. Member: As the leader.

Hon. Ben Smith: —as the leader.

An Hon. Member: Absolutely.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they left persons with the highest tax burden in history.

An Hon. Member: Aha! Go on!

Hon. E. David Burt: We have cut taxes for working people. We have provided the boost. We provide the assistance. They told seniors that money doesn't grow on trees.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right!

Hon. E. David Burt: We made sure they kept up with the rate of inflation, Mr. Speaker. So, unquestionably,

the record, Mr. Speaker, is better than when we took office.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Second [supplementary]?

Hon. Ben Smith: Second supplementary.

So, Mr. Speaker, I guess the Premier is stating, for the population who are listening, that the benefits that he is giving are making them feel that they are better off today than when it started because the cost of living, the cost of food and electricity and health care, the burdens of everyday people . . . he is saying that his Government has made all of those people feel better over the last eight years.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I could honestly answer this question—

An Hon. Member: Then do.

Hon. E. David Burt: —for the next 22 minutes.

An Hon. Member: Go ahead and do it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: I am not going to because I can go through the entire gamut, Mr. Speaker.

So, when we want to talk about compare and contrast, let's start on item number one, the issue of gas prices, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Come on.

Hon. E. David Burt: What we have been through during our time in office [includes] two major gas spikes. And when that party doubled taxes on gasoline, it was this party's fiscal discipline and management of the budget that enabled us to eliminate the taxes on gasoline and keep it in a price freeze to make sure that people were protected from the pump.

Now, let's go over—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, the Honourable Member is just sitting there chirping when he knows that it is completely . . . completely not factual.

So, let's go on to electricity prices, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Go on.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let's move on to electricity prices. *[Inaudible interjections]*

An Hon. Member: Going up.

Hon. E. David Burt: Whereas they doubled—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —doubled—

An Hon. Member: Oh yes!

Hon. E. David Burt: Doubled—

An Hon. Member: It just went up again.

Hon. E. David Burt: —the price, the taxes on gasoline—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear the [answer]. So, when they talk, I will stop until they stop to listen.

An Hon. Member: Oh, I'll speak to that.

The Speaker: Speak to me.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, you want to hear . . . you asked a question. You want to hear the answer. We have got to hear the answer.

Continue, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: So here we are, Mr. Speaker.

So, on the matter related to electricity taxes, the Honourable Members, the honourable party opposite, *doubled* the tax on electricity, Mr. Speaker. This party, through our fiscal discipline, eliminated that tax entirely, Mr. Speaker, making sure that savings were passed on to persons.

I can go on to payroll taxes again to make sure that we recognise that persons who are making under \$132,000 a year are paying less in taxes, meaning that there is more money in their pockets, Mr. Speaker.

Shall we go on to the other matters that are related to assistance for families? I have spoken about child care, Mr. Speaker. I have spoken—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Just talk to me. Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am fine, but it is as though—

Hon. E. David Burt: It is as though if they forget the record, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is as though they don't want to recognise the particular matters that have been progressed forward, Mr. Speaker. It is so . . . it is amazing.

So, when we talk about these things, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member wants to say that payroll tax changes, that pension increases, that record agreements with public sector workers to boost . . . to go back to historic pay levels which were reduced underneath their term in office, don't matter. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They do matter. They do matter to the persons in this country.

They do matter to the persons who are working in construction. They do matter to those persons who, who are working in construction, Mr. Speaker, who may be on average salaries, who would have been paying \$8,000 less in taxes in the time that we have been in office than if it was the opposite party, Mr. Speaker.

When you put more money into people's pockets, it gives them more ability to do. And what are we doing otherwise, Mr. Speaker? Record investments in affordable housing, which you have seen from the Honourable Deputy Premier.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: We are going to continue to expand, Mr. Speaker. We are going to continue to press ahead. And we are able to do this because of our sound management of the budget.

We can go back to the first question that he asked, Mr. Speaker. Because the first question he asked was about economic diversification. We tabled an Economic Recovery Plan. We tabled an Economic Development Strategy.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We are executing on those particular matters. And, Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to press ahead.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Opposition Leader, you have used all three of your questions. The next Member who indicated they have questions today is MP Weeks.

Would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE HOUSING, GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE

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

Mr. Speaker, few issues matter more to Bermudians than the security of a place to call home. Those of us, like myself, who are out there canvassing receive a lot of calls about housing and [about] how we can assist as Members of Parliament. So, can the Honourable Premier tell this House how this Government is delivering on its commitment to provide affordable housing for the people of Bermuda?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question. I wish to also take the opportunity to pay tribute to the time in which he served and worked as Minister of National Security, recognising that he can—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Are you okay?

—and continues to be a valued Member of the Government benches.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question because housing, as we recognise and understand, is not an abstract issue. And for Bermudians to find a safe and stable place to live, whether young families can plan their future, or whether seniors can live and remain secure in their country, what we will recognise, Mr. Speaker . . . And I think it is important to contrast . . . I think it is important to contrast the record of delivery on housing over the last five years. Over the last five years, Mr. Speaker—we can even go longer than that, over the record—

An Hon. Member: Thirty.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, the Honourable Member wants to go to 30 years?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, they want to go to 30 years, Mr. Speaker? They want to talk about Loughlands? They want to talk about Southside? They want to talk about all those other housing developments? We can go back there, Mr. Speaker, because we recognise what they have not done.

But let's go, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. The listening audience on the radio is waiting to hear your answer.

Continue on.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, a few weeks ago, the Government outlined a comprehensive multi-site

plan to invest an estimated \$150 million into delivery of 229 residential units across Bermuda. We know that those particular matters are being advanced in addition to that. And we know that we are going to see advanced precast concrete construction that is going to take place, whether or not those are properties in the East End of the Island and also the West End of the Island. But, Mr. Speaker, the reality is that [this] is part of a much wider effort. That is just the latest phase. We know about the significant number of units that are being renovated and brought back into use, whether it be at Harmony [Hall], [or] whether it be in various places.

And in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, this is what is important. This is what is also important, Mr. Speaker. It is important to recognise that it is multifaceted. So, whether or not we are talking about housing for seniors, whether or not we are talking about housing for young people, whether or not we are talking about housing for families, all of these matters are being progressed by the Deputy Premier and the Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] to ensure that we can.

The Honourable Deputy Premier said and promised that we are going to put out an Affordable Housing Strategy to make sure we advance those particular matters. We are. And that is what is important, because housing, just as it is in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, is an issue globally. And from our perspective, we are going to continue to work and make policies that are going to make sure that more housing is available for Bermudians.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

QUESTION 2: AFFORDABLE HOUSING, GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE

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

Mr. Speaker . . . Thanks for that, Mr. Premier.

Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Premier advise what this programme will mean specifically for my constituents and families in the central parishes?

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

Mr. Speaker, I can speak on matters related to the central parishes: That we have completed new units at Harmony Terrace [East] and delivered homes in Middle Town as well.

But what I can say, Mr. Speaker, is globally, whether or not it is in the East End of the Island at Tommy Fox Road in St. David's where new homes are being built as part of the first 84-unit phase at Channel House where we are doing retrofitting as well, specifically for senior living. As we know, senior living is a challenge.

And it is important, Mr. Speaker, as you recognise, as you expand housing supply persons can move from one place into something that is more available, which might create additional supply in other places. So

that is also important, Mr. Speaker. At Battery Road, the Chelsea apartments and other places in the east that are also being done are being renovated and brought back to use to families who need them. So, whether it is in the East End of the Island, Mr. Speaker, whether it is the central [area] of the Island, or whether it is the West End of the Island, we are continuing to advance on affordable housing projects under the leadership of the Honourable Deputy Premier.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

QUESTION 3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING, GOVERNMENT'S COMMITMENT TO PROVIDE

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Yes, Mr. Speaker, and thank you.

Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Premier remind this House how this Government's record on delivering homes for Bermudians compares to that of the former administration?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, can I ask the Honourable Member to repeat his question? There was too much chirping.

The Speaker: Member, could you repeat your question?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, can the Honourable Premier remind this House how this Government's record on delivering homes for Bermudians compares to that of the former administration?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: I . . . I . . . I—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Uh-uh.

[General uproar]

Hon. E. David Burt: I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable [Premier], unfortunately, is misleading the House. He already answered that in the questions before that. He already answered it. He did the comparison as to what he thought we did and what they did.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He already did it. In addition to that, the Housing Minister has already put that in the public domain and answered the same question—the exact same question. To ask for a reminder is duplicitous.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, you are going to hear it right now.

The Speaker: Members, when asking questions, be mindful of the fact that if the information is already in the public domain—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I don't know if it is out there.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: —you are limiting the person who answers to what they can say.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —I note that the Honourable Member has asked for a comparison, and I think that it is important, Mr. Speaker—

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable [Premier] is misleading the House. I did not ask for a comparison.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I said that the comparison has already been made.

The Speaker: He was talking about the Member who put the question. He—

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no, no. That is all right. That is all right.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked for a comparison, and I think it is incredibly appropriate.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The comparisons are in the public domain because they were provided by comprehensive briefs from the Minister of Housing in prior sittings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked for a comparison, and when we talk about a comparison in Housing policy from the former Government to this Government, it could not be more stark, Mr. Speaker. It could not be more stark. Because what we have seen, Mr. Speaker, since the pandemic is record investment in affordable housing—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: —hundreds of units that have been brought online, that have been renovated, persons who are being able to get affordable housing options. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, it is not just where it is talking about house building. Let us not forget, it was this particular Government that not only expanded the capability for Bermudians to get houses through the Mortgage Guarantee Programme,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aha!

Hon. E. David Burt: —which has delivered multiple Bermudians being able to own their first home,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: —[it] reduced mortgage rates, [and] reduced down payments as well. Those are measures of which this Government has done, Mr. Speaker. And so, it is very interesting to see from a contrast perspective . . . from a contrast perspective, whether it was this Minister of Housing [and Municipalities], whether it was the Minister who had responsibility for Housing before, the investment that has been made

into Bermuda Housing Corporation has been at record levels, which has seen hundreds of units that have been delivered.

What did they deliver when they are in office, Mr. Speaker? They finished one Progressive Labour Party project that they downsized, which they criticise now because they did not downsize any more housing, Mr. Speaker. And then for the rest of their time they delivered not a single affordable home, Mr. Speaker. The record of zero versus the record of hundreds. It is a very appropriate . . . And we will continue to make sure that people in this country recognise and remember which Government is going to deliver affordable housing and is committed to putting the money to do so.

Oh yes, Mr. Speaker, let me not forget, the money for which they cancelled those houses, we still have to pay money for it.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, Standing . . . point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Standing Order 19(11)(f), [imputing] improper motive.

The Premier knows that the reason the OBA had to cancel those projects is because they were left with a massive deficit, which they had to borrow money [for] just to pay the civil servants!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, they did not want to cancel housing; they wanted to pay the civil servants.

[Inaudible interjections and general uproar]

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you. That completed the questions from MP Weeks.

The next question this morning is from the actual Member who just sat down.

MP DeCouto, would you like to put your question now?

QUESTION 1: "CENTRALLY MANGED FUND" PROJECTS TO BE IDENTIFIED AND FUNDED

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

The Honourable Premier will recall that there is a . . . in the budget [there] was a \$14 million "centrally

managed fund” (quote/unquote) that did not have any specific projects allocated to it or identified. Have any specific projects yet been identified and selected or approved to be funded by those funds?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

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

To my knowledge, I believe there has been one approval . . . two approvals. One [was] for matters related to entrepreneurship and for the BEDC [Bermuda Economic Development Corporation], advancing the national entrepreneurship policy. And the other one is matters related to artificial intelligence. [I am] happy to get these specific details to the Honourable Member. [I] was planning on discussing those particular matters when we do the [Supplementary Estimates] next week.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

Could the Minister advise what the amounts were and how the amounts were determined and approved?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: It was amounts that were requested by the particular ministries. I do not have those figures off the top of my head. I do know that out of the total \$14 million, we have not even come close to half or something. But as I said, we are discussing supplementary estimates next week. I was expecting to make sure that those particular details were shared at that particular point in time, but I am happy, happy to get the specific details to the Honourable Member, as matters related to finances, et cetera, are perfectly legitimate matters for scrutiny in this House. And [I] have no issue sharing those.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Sure.

Second supplementary or . . .

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Okay.

The next question this morning is from the Opposition Whip.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: GRAND ATLANTIC NOT AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good morning, Premier.

Considering [that] housing is on the docket this morning, would the Premier consider the fact that 79 units were built at Grand Atlantic for residential homes by the PLP Government.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Seventy-nine units were built for residential housing. It has become a basketball of what-should-it-be?

Does the Premier believe that that was a wise investment wasting taxpayers' money to have it for residential, as they talk about building all of these homes, and they had the opportunity to put 79 units in place and to put Bermudians into it? We are now, years later, bringing in housing—

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: The Honourable Member is misleading the House by not acknowledging the impact that the OBA had on the project when the Government was trying to move it forward by saying it was going to fall into the ocean, that people should not be able to live there, and then used it for—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay. Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No, no. no.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That is not a point of order.

The Speaker: No. Settle down.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you very much. I did not even finish the question, and he is trying to finish it for me.

The Speaker: Go ahead. Put your question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, well, now that he said that . . . considering the fact that this PLP Government wasted millions of dollars for residential homing, to then put it into a project for a hotel that blew up like dynamite, to now trying to decide . . . and it is still not full, Mr. Speaker. Could the . . . could the—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. I said in this House last week, in my Ministerial Statement, that is 100 per cent full.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. But [that] was not for low-cost [housing]. It is for people who can afford it.

They built those original homes for people who needed low-cost housing.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, you cannot hide behind the fact that now you are charging \$3,000 for a unit for people, foreigners, who can afford to rent it. So, was that a good investment in the taxpayers' money by the PLP Government?

The Speaker: Okay, that is your question. The question was, was it a good investment?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, that was possibly the longest question I have ever heard asked in this House.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It's a record.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so I am happy to answer the question, Mr. Speaker, because let's look back at the history.

An Hon. Member: Correct.

Hon. E. David Burt: I think it is important to remember the history, because this project that was built was built over the exact same successful model that has delivered a significant amount of affordable housing at Loughlands. Let's remember, it was the exact same model—different property, same developers, same Bermuda Housing Corporation, same things, et cetera. When those properties went up there, Mr. Speaker, it was the One Bermuda Alliance . . . sorry. I think at that point in time was the United Bermuda Party. And then, you know, [it] switched. Maybe it was the BDA [Bermuda Democratic Alliance], and then, you know, morphed into . . . What is it called? You know, so it is all three—the Combined Opposition.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: At that point in time, Mr. Speaker, then said—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Then—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Then said, Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Then [they] said, and I quote, as we all know these matters, *These things will fall into the water. They will not be safe.* And so, Mr. Speaker, it is quite rich for those individuals to then wonder why persons did not want to buy houses when they sat there and said they are going to fall into the water.

But let us continue, Mr. Speaker, because it is important to remember that when they became the Government,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aha!

Hon. E. David Burt: —and this Member may have actually been—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Remind them.

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Remind them.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: They then decided that after scaring people so they could not then sell the houses, they decided that they were going to change their project. So that is fine. The project was changed, and it was a—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It went to America's Cup.

Hon. E. David Burt: But yes . . . But however, yes . . . And that is important to note, Mr. Speaker. It is important to note that the project . . . it would not be safe. But yet they managed to find a way to house America's Cup people—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —inside of those particular units. I digress, Mr. Speaker. Let us move forward, Mr. Speaker.

So, we get to the political perspective. There is a view trying to make sure that we make the numbers and the figures work, and so there was a view and a proposal to move forward on matters related to the conversion of that particular property to a matter of a hotel

property. [It] went through that. All those things have been spelled out and shared here in this particular Honourable House, debated many points in time. Where we got to is that we said at the end of the day, with the things that were happening, we needed to make another change. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, good governments observe where they have their particular situations and make adjustments where it is necessary.

Here is reality, Mr. Speaker. Number one, the units are fully rented. Number two, they are not all rented at market rates. There are units that are rented at discounted rates for Bermudians who are returning home, which is important, Mr. Speaker, because we are making sure that we use everything at our avenue and disposal to ensure that we will continue to house Bermudians.

So, the Honourable Member has asked a question as to whether or not this made sense. I would say at the very beginning the investment was sound as it was built off the exact same model that delivered significant affordable housing at Loughlands. And if it was not for the sabotage of the Opposition at the time, we would probably not be having this conversation and debate at this time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, indeedy.

The Speaker: Yes, you have a supplementary.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So then, considering the answer that—

The Speaker: If your question could be a little shorter, we will get a shorter answer.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Considering the answer that the Premier has just given, would the Premier consider it to be duplicitous and somewhat hypocritical if he says that the OBA said it was going to fall in the water, after the OBA was Government? They had a second shot at this property, and they continued on to make it a hotel. He is blaming us for making it a hotel, but he continued to make it a hotel. Is it duplicitous that he did not go back to his original design by the PLP

Government to put Bermudians in affordable housing by continuing to put it in a hotel?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, can I have a point of order?

The Speaker: What is your point of order?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: My point of order is that, just for memory's sake, I was that Minister in 2011.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Allow me to give the point of order.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. I want to hear what the point of order is.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: He is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker. And I have the facts. I was that Minister in 2000—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: No, you don't. I was there. I was there. So, when the PLP returned to power, it was difficult telling our people about the low-cost housing—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker, this is a point of clarification—

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: —because they thought it was going to fall into the water.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We are not accepting a point of clarification.

The Speaker: Your point of order was that you were the Minister. That is all I got out of that. So, what was the point of order that you were trying to do rather than go to a long statement? I am trying to get a statement.

An Hon. Member: He does not have one.

The Speaker: Okay. You want to—

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: He was misleading the House, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Let the Premier respond. I think the Premier was ready to respond. He got up.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked whether or not the project should have been changed or not changed, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. E. David Burt: The reality is, right now, Bermudians are currently being housed at that property. There are those who are there below market rent. We are using everything at our disposal while also . . . while also, Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: —providing record—

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: —investments in affordable housing across this country.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, that brings us to the close of the 30 minutes for the Premier's Question [Period].

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We will now start the clock at the 60 minutes for the regular questions. And we will begin with the fact that there are written questions. And the written questions are both, some for an oral response and some for a written response. And we will start with the written responses first. And the clock begins.

The first question [for a written response] was from the Opposition Leader to the Minister, to the Minister . . . well, it would have been the Junior Minister at the time, but the Minister of Education sits here now. And I believe you already have the answers.

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

QUESTIONS: NUMBER OF STUDENTS GRADUATING FROM SENIOR SCHOOLS

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please provide for this Honourable House, for each graduating class of Government senior schools from June 2022 through June 2026, the number of students in that class who were enrolled in Government schools from the commencement of their first year of primary school?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please provide for this Honourable House, for each graduating class of Government senior schools from June 2022 through June 2026, the number

of students in that class who were enrolled in Government schools from the commencement of their first year of middle school?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Junior Minister please provide for this Honourable House, for each graduating class of Government senior schools from June 2022 through June 2026, the number of students in that class who were enrolled in Government schools from the commencement of their first year of senior school?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The second question, again, at the time was for the Junior Minister, but now the Minister sits here. And that was from MP Tucker. And that, again, was related to Education. Do you have your written answers?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

QUESTIONS: CHILD SUPPORT NEW ELECTRONIC CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Junior Minister please provide for this Honourable House an update on the purchase of the new Electronic Case Management System to support the management of child support payments that was promised in 2024, and the timeline for implementation?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Junior Minister please outline for this Honourable House how the ministry is ensuring timely processing, monitoring and enforcement of child maintenance orders while the new Electronic Case Management System remains outstanding, and what safeguards exist to prevent delays or lapses in payments to parents?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Will the Junior Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether the new Electronic Case Management System will integrate with other government databases, including the Tax Commissioner, Immigration, and Social Insurance, so that the Ministry can more effectively identify, track, and enforce unpaid child support obligations?

The Speaker: Thank you.

The third question is an oral question, so it will be dealt with here on the floor. And that is from MP King to the Minister.

And, MP King, would you like to put your question now?

[Pause]

The Speaker: MP King stepped out. We will move on.

The next question is, again, an oral question. And that is from MP Linda Smith. And that is to the Minister of Education.

Would you like to put your question now?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I would.

The Speaker: Thank you.

QUESTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING ACCESS TO AUTOMATED SERVICES

Ms. Linda Smith: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, Members of the House and the listening audience.

My question is, given that much, if not all, of the Department of Planning's public services are automated via its portal, will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House about what the Department of Planning is doing to ensure that its services are fairly accessible to all of the population, particularly our seniors and vulnerable people who cannot easily navigate the department's technology?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question.

I will [preface] this by saying it is not that the department is . . . I think the question said: *What are they starting to do?* This has always been the case with the Department of Planning, and that is the reception front desk is available during regular business hours to answer any questions and assist those who are unfamiliar or have challenges with the department's online system.

The department has always had kiosks in the reception area for officers to assist members of the public with their queries and to demonstrate how to find and submit information online.

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

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do.

Inaccessibility to access is access denied. Does the Minister agree with that? And if so, for senior citizens and vulnerable and disabled people to make their way into the Department of Planning to ask questions or get general information and quick answers to questions to determine whether or not what they are seeing is a problem and whether there should be some enforcement or something can be done to help them with the predicament that they find themselves in is very difficult. And so, my question is: While other people can access answers to questions via technology, in many cases senior citizens cannot access that because they do not have the abilities to navigate the

technology. But is there anybody who is answering the phone, a hotline, somebody they can talk to? They actually give up because they feel like they cannot get the answers that they need. So that is really the bulk of my question.

Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I don't . . . I don't—

The Speaker: Go ahead, Minister.

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

I thought I did answer that by saying the front desk is available to answer questions. The telephone number is a public number, and if you can dial and call in, someone will answer the phone and provide you with the answers. If they wish to come up to the department, they will be assisted in navigating anything they need to find on the computer and shown how that process actually works.

The building that they are in has been recently renovated. It is fully accessible based on the Department of Planning's requirements that all new buildings be accessible. So, anyone can come into that building, whether they are in a wheelchair, whether they are otherwise disabled, get into the elevator, come up to the third floor, and everything they need to find is accessible. If they cannot make it in, they can pick up the phone and call, and they will be assisted by the front desk.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do. And that really is the crux of the matter—accessibility. Because when people call, oftentimes the phone does not get answered—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Ms. Linda Smith: —and my question is:—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

Ms. Linda Smith: —Is there somebody who is dedicated—

The Speaker: We have got a point of order. We have got a point of order.

Ms. Linda Smith: My question is—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Point of order.

The Speaker: There is a point of order. You have to take the point of order.

Ms. Linda Smith: Oh.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to quote. I cannot quote the exact Standing Order, but the Member is making assumptions that the phones are not answered. She would have to bring proof of that. My team has guaranteed me that the phones do get answered.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay.

Members, the Minister is re-emphasising the fact that his team tries their very best to answer every call.

Ms. Linda Smith: I am sure that the team does, but the reality is it does not actually work out that way in many cases.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: For who?

Ms. Linda Smith: And I can tell you I have made efforts to call the Department of Planning on behalf of other people, and I have not been able to get through. So, you know, everybody should be able to get an answer and be heard, and that is not what is happening in reality.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Was there a question?

Ms. Linda Smith: My question is: Does the Minister accept that? And if so, what is going to be done about it?

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

Mr. Speaker, I do not understand. I am trying my very best to figure out what is being asked here. If you call and you do not get an answer, you call back until you get an answer. If 100 people are calling at the same time, obviously, they cannot call . . . They cannot answer 100 people at the identical time. And if you call and you do not get someone, or you leave a message you will get called back. But if you call and you do not reach anyone, you call back, and someone will answer the phone, Mr. Speaker. That is all I can offer.

The Speaker: Okay.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Supplemental?

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I have a supplemental, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You have a supplemental question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will take your supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Would the Minister accept that perhaps as a Minister, the responses that he gets from the Department of Planning are perhaps a lot faster than the general public, who often have to wait a long time, or their questions or messages are lost and not picked up?

Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: What was the question?

The Speaker: I am trying to put that in the right context for a response. The question is—

[Crosstalk]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: May I re-ask it, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps I will try to clarify it.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Okay, if you can clarify it, clarify it a bit more.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Would the Honourable Minister accept that perhaps his experience with the Department of Planning results in much more responsive answers to his questions than the general public? Our constituents are telling us their messages are often not responded to.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, see . . . see—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, the answer to that is simply no. The public gets a much faster response than the Minister does.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member. Your second question?

QUESTION 2: DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING, NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS RECEIVED RELATING TO COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES OR BUSINESSES OPERATING WITHIN RESIDENTIAL ZONES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House about how many complaints the Department of Planning has received since the pandemic regarding residentially zoned properties being used for commercial purposes, including concerns about in-

creased traffic, storage of commercial materials, and even light industrial activities?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, it is estimated between 30 and 40 requests for investigations have been received since 1 March 2020 relating to commercial activities or businesses operating within residential zones. Approximately 10 of these matters have escalated to code cases for further investigation and enforcement action.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And what enforcement activities are taking place in the ones that obviously are official, you know, are proper cases?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, enforcement cases could result in fines [or] civil penalties. It could result in having to apply for retroactive applications or proper planning applications to receive permission for whatever is going on.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do.

And this kind of ties back to my original question. This problem has obviously been more difficult for seniors who may not be being heard. And what is being done to protect their properties and their quality of life in homes where their access is either being delayed because there is construction equipment moving in and out of a property that is landlocked by houses around that? And I believe there are some cases like that.

So, my question is, what is being done for a senior who cannot navigate the portal and maybe is not having their phone answered at a regular time and on a regular basis and as it is needed, to help them navigate the problems that they may be having?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, again, there is a process for reporting things that you feel are against planning reg—

The Speaker: Is the microphone on?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes. There is . . . My voice is . . .

Mr. Speaker, there is a process for reporting activities that people may deem as illegal as we have had complaints, as I have detailed complaints as such. But Mr. Speaker, it is obvious this line of questioning is

speaking to a specific or maybe a couple of specific cases. I remind that Member that I remain available for her to send me those specific cases, and I will do the investigation myself. It is a simple process, Mr. Speaker, and I get it all the time where persons will say: *I think I am having an issue with something that is going on in the Department of Planning. Could . . . could you actually look into that?* And then when we tend to look into it, it tends to come down to the person does not like what they have been hearing from the Department of Planning, and they would like further action. That is probably most of the cases.

However, I stand here today and offer anyone on that side. If they have an issue and they wish to come and talk to me directly, we can work it out, Mr. Speaker. We do not have to have this back and forth and innuendos of, *I have been speaking to dozens of people and this is what has happened.*

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: It could possibly be anyone—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Standing Order 19(11)(f) is imputing improper motive. It is not innuendo. It is a recitation of fact. And I am sure they have constituents who are coming to them saying: *Hey, MP So-and-so, I am calling this department, and no one calls me back.* So, I do not appreciate that.

The Speaker: And what was missed there was that the Minister was offering a solution to the Members, saying, if anybody—

An Hon. Member: Aha!

The Speaker: If anybody has a problem—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No. He is saying if anybody has a problem, please contact him, and he will assist the Member.

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

But the innuendo is that we are making these things up. It is not innuendo; it is factual information we receive from the voters.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. The Minister offered help to you, to [help] any Member. I take your point. I do not want

. . . I do not want missed what was offered. The offer was to any Member, if your constituent is calling you about something that is bothering them in the process, the Minister said he is prepared to help any Member. I do not want that piece lost in there. Okay?

[What is] your third question . . . third question, Member?

QUESTION 3: SOUTHLANDS PARK, STATUS OF PLANS FOR ZIP LINE FACILITY

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

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the status of future plans for the use of Southlands Park given that the Development Applications Board, the DAB, sided with environmental groups and the public's opposition to having a zip line facility in the park?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, thank you for this question. It allows me to provide some clarity on some things that happen in Planning that people tend to misinterpret.

Mr. Speaker, the DAB does not side with objectors, but rather resolves to agree with the department's recommendation that is contained within the report, which is publicly accessible on their customer site. However, the question about development at Southlands Park is not for the Department of Planning. That is for the Department of Public Works—Public Lands and Buildings, or the Department of Parks to answer because they are the ones that would be making applications for development.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes.

So, I guess my question is, who is the final arbiter in the decision about whether or not there is going to be a zip line facility in Southlands Park?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, once again, [this is] an opportunity to educate. You make an application to the Department of Planning. It is vetted by the Department of Planning and the planners. They make a recommendation on what the decision should be on that. That decision is then passed on, given to the Development Applications Board, which looks at the report, which looks at what has been submitted by the applicant, and they are the ones that make the final decision on whether Planning permission is granted or not.

As we do know, there is an appeal process that can take place. And that can be if it has been refused or if it has been approved. Someone can appeal that particular decision. And that decision then goes to the Minister. And that is the process of how Planning appli-

cations are adjudicated within the Department of Planning.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, I do.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Ms. Linda Smith: So, given what the Minister has just described, my question is: What is the status of Southlands, the application that has been put forth by the zip line enterprise for Southlands?

The Speaker: Minister, go ahead.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, as that Member started her very first question, the electronic system within the Department of Planning is quite extensive and quite open, and the status of that application is in the public domain. You just have to go to the website, look up that Planning number, and it will give you everything that is happening with that Planning application.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That completed all your supplementaries and your questions.

That brings us, Members, to an end of the written questions for today. We will now move on to questions that were generated from the Statements that were given this morning. And the first Statement this morning, or the first Statement that has questions this morning—

Mr. Robert King: Excuse me, Mr. Speaker. I had my questions. I had a bathroom break. I did not want to go ahead and—

The Speaker: Mr. King, you are back in. Yes? Okay?

Mr. Robert King: I am wondering if, you know, I might have an opportunity to ask questions.

The Speaker: MP King was absent at the time and stepped out to go to the bathroom.

Minister, I think the questions are directed to the rest of the team.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: Yes . . . No, the questions are for the Junior Minister of Justice.

The Speaker: Justice. Okay. Okay. All right.

MP King, you have questions in this morning that require an oral response. You can put your first question.

QUESTION 1: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS REVIEW PANEL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you for allowing the questions as well.

Will the Junior Minister please inform this Honourable House which recommendations contained within the Department of Corrections review panel report have been fully implemented, which remain outstanding, the reasons for any delays, and the anticipated completion date for each outstanding recommendation?

The Speaker: Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And thank you, MP King, for your questions.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his questions. I will remind the House that it was this Government that commissioned the independent review, tabled the panel's report in full, and confronted its findings with candour. We invited this scrutiny.

The report contains 75 recommendations, and every one of them is being actioned through a live post-inspection action plan developed jointly by the Department of Corrections and the Prison Officers Association with direct support from the United Kingdom Ministry of Justice. Each recommendation carries a responsible—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Each recommendation carries a responsible officer, a target date, and an evidential standard. Several recommendations have already been completed or reflect commended good practice being sustained. Others are in active delivery with target dates in this current quarter and the remainder are tied to the budget cycle or, in one case, to legislative change.

Where original dates have slipped, the causes of various staffing pressures, the report itself identified together with operational priorities and the scheduling of UK specialist support and revised timelines have been set under active management.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Attorney General and Minister of Justice, in her Ministerial Statement to the Senate on 20 May 2026, committed to reporting on this reform programme quarterly, and she remains fully committed to doing so. The detailed account the Honourable Member seeks will be provided as part of that promised quarterly update. That is the appropriate vehicle for information of that depth. It is already committed and will be honoured. This Government set the standard of accountability on Corrections reform, Mr. Speaker, and it will keep it.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Junior Minister for his response.

Understanding that the issues at the Department of Corrections do include the safety of officers and inmates, infrastructure, potential human rights violations through lack of programming, staff being overworked due to lack of staff, and the commensurate risk to mental and physical health, which three areas of the . . . well, which three recommendations were given priority to be dealt with immediately? I know that you said there were 75 recommendations, and out of the 75, there must have been some triage which identified things that needed to happen within the next six months. So, I am hoping that the [Junior] Minister can provide clarification on that.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Member.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, the substantive Minister sits in another place, and I do not want to speak out of place on her behalf. So those questions can be noted, and hopefully we can get a response back to that Member.

The Speaker: You commit to providing a response then?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, [I] commit to providing a response.

The Speaker: Okay.

Supplementary or your second question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Would the Junior Minister agree to submit the answers to those questions for the next sitting of the House?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will have to be guided by the Minister, but hopefully we can . . . the substantive Minister.

The Speaker: Second question?

QUESTION 2: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS REVIEW PANEL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Junior Minister please advise the Honourable House what measurable improvements have been achieved since the publication of the Department of Corrections review panel report with respect to safety and security of correctional officers, assaults and violence within correctional facilities, staff recruitment and retention, inmate rehabilitation outcomes, and recidivism?

The Speaker: Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me first say how this Government approaches measurement. We will report real data on internationally accepted standards on a consistent quarterly basis as this House deserves honest measurement. In that spirit, I take each limb in turn.

A) Safety and security of correctional offices. Officer safety remains a significant concern, and I will not pretend the risk has yet measurably decreased. What has changed is the foundation. An HMPPS [His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service] specialist security team is on the Island this month to drive security enhancements. The head of national locking recommendations is being progressed. Monthly meetings with Works and Engineering are prioritising security critical repairs, and a condition survey of all facilities is currently underway. Measurable improvement will follow this work, and the data will be reported as it develops.

B) Assaults and violence within correctional facilities. The position is the same, Mr. Speaker, and I say so plainly. Risk levels within the facilities have not yet measurably decreased. The security enhancement initiatives being delivered with the HMPPS security team are designed precisely to mitigate those risks, and trend data on assaults and violence will come to this House through the quarterly reporting cycle.

C) Staff recruitment and retention. Recruitment of correctional officers is actively underway with preliminary assessments completed. The HMPPS staff profiling team completed a full workforce profiling exercise on Island from the 12th to the 19th of May, and its formal report will drive smarter deployment. Two officers are in the Overseas Territories' Next Generation Prison Leaders programme including UK investigation training. An independent staff engagement survey will run this fiscal year, and supplemental funding has been approved by Cabinet for dedicated maintenance staff to relieve operational pressure.

[Pause]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Sorry, Mr.—

The Speaker: Supplementary or—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I am not finished, my—

The Speaker: Oh. Okay.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: All the answers got cut off, Mr. Speaker, so I have to go digital.

D) Mr. Speaker, inmate rehabilitation outcomes. Rehabilitative opportunity is expanded. Bermuda College APACE [Athora Professional & Career Education] courses are available now. Additional programmes aligned to the college's academic year are

targeted for September with open university discussions broadening tertiary options. The Right Living House therapeutic community continues its structured substance misuse support, and Narcotics Anonymous support is being extended to remanded inmates for the first time.

There are also efforts to engage inmates actively in the development of key initiatives. As several initiatives remain in implementation, assessing overall effectiveness today would be premature. Key performance indicators will be established and measured once implementation matures, and the results will be reported to this House.

E) Recidivism. Recidivism is, by definition, a lagging indicator and insufficient time has passed for any change in reoffending to be measurable.

The Speaker: Supplementary, or your third question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: I took on board that the Junior Minister said that they report on the data, and that is appropriate. [The] question I have is: How is the data going to be used? What are the key performance indicators, and what is the reduction percentage that we are looking for in particular areas? What is the performance measurement that we are going to be using by percentage in terms of reduction of recidivism and other areas as well?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Member.

As I stated previously, Member, I will have to defer to the substantive Minister and hopefully can provide the responses to you.

The Speaker: Third question?

QUESTION 3: DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS REVIEW PANEL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Robert King: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable junior Minister inform this Honourable House whether the Government has sought independent implementation, oversight, or technical assistance from His Majesty's Prison Service or other internationally recognised corrections authorities to ensure that recommendations of the Department of Corrections review panel report are fully implemented and consistent with international best practise, and if not, why not?

The Speaker: Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker the answer is yes. The Ministry of Justice has established an oversight committee drawn from the Department of Corrections, Prison Officers Association, and relevant subject matter experts. Additionally, there are regular engagements, virtual and on Island, with a UK Ministry of Justice representative who is providing direct implementation support. An Overseas Territories prison advisor is coordinating specialist training. The HMPPS staff profiling team completed its workforce exercise on Island in May, and two officers are enrolled in the overseas territories Next Generation Prison Leaders programme with UK-based investigation training.

The Speaker: Supplementary or . . .

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Will the person or persons responsible for oversight be stationed in Bermuda for a period of one to three years to ensure that the recommendations are implemented? Because what we do know is that the advice and council of consultants is sought, information and data are received, proposals on how to resolve issues, and then it falls apart because the lack of oversight and ensuring that the projected targets are achieved. So, the question I am asking is: Will a person, the representative, be stationed in Bermuda for a period of one to three years to ensure recommendations are implemented? That is my final question.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As mentioned again, Member, I will defer to the substantive Minister to get a response to your question. Thank you for your questions.

The Speaker: Now, Members, that brings us to the close of the written questions this morning. About half the time has been consumed, but we do have 32 minutes left. And we will go to the questions from the Statements this morning.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: The first Statement that has questions this morning is the Statement by the Minister of Youth, Social Development and [Seniors].

Minister, you have Members who wish to ask questions in regard to your first Statement. And the first question is from MP Tucker.

MP Tucker.

QUESTION 1: FAMILY PRESERVATION TIER II PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

My question is . . . Well, first of all, the Minister mentioned that 10 families were referred to the Family Preservation [Tier II] Programme, and she also mentioned that other families are in progress for referral. So, I just wanted to know the number of families that are currently in process for referral.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

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

I do not have that answer, but I will endeavour to get that answer for the Member.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a supplementary or second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, Mr. Speaker. I do have a second question.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

QUESTION 2: FAMILY PRESERVATION TIER II PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: [My] second question is, Can the Minister tell us what the family-to-staff ratio is, please, for that particular programme?

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: The programme has, Mr. Speaker, six . . . I am sorry . . . three social workers and three social workers' assistants. Currently we have capacity of between eight and ten families each.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: Supplementary.

Thank you to the Minister.

[I] just wanted to know if that is international best practice.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Great.

The Speaker: Supplementary or third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Supplementary, please, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Go ahead.

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would just like to know if the number of staff is sufficient to meet the growing demand. So, is it sufficient for now, or because the demands keep growing, are they looking, or will they be looking to hire additional staff?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker this is a new programme, and programmes under Government are constantly under evaluation to see whether or not new staff are required. But right now, we know that it is sufficient staff. Once our numbers increase, we can make a better evaluation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Just a supplemental, please.

The Speaker: Supplemental on that?

Ms. Robin Tucker: On that particular . . .

The Speaker: Well, you had your two supplementals.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Oh, did I? Okay sorry.

The Speaker: Yes. That is why I said your third question.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Okay, third question, then.

QUESTION 3: FAMILY PRESERVATION TIER II PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: I just want to know as the demands increase, does the Ministry have anything in place to ensure that staff do not experience burnout particularly in circumstances where dealing with high-risk families is quite difficult?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

There are governmental processes that every government area that has human resources would go through where if more staff is required, there are processes where we have to apply for staff. So, there are processes in place that if we needed staff, we could seek out staff.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, Mr. Speaker. But I would like to clarify because the response was not actually what I was asking. I was speaking about the existing staff and potential burnout having to deal with high at-risk families and what the Ministry had in place to ensure that that staff did not experience burnout. Or if they did, what was sort of that process for care for the staff?

The Speaker: You are asking: Is there a support system in place for the staff?

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

The Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker. In every government department there is a support programme, that is [the] EAP [Employee Assistance Programme], if any staff experience burnout. This is a new programme, Mr. Speaker. The staff are quite excited and engaged and are loving the opportunity to be able to establish rapport with their clients. The staff know that if they are experiencing burnout, they can reach out to their relevant managers [or] supervisors to be able to get support. But there are also . . . I would like to reiterate there are processes in place for our governmental human resources to explore assistance for more staff should that need arise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Do I have one last supplemental, or am I done? I am done? Okay. All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

The Member MP King also has questions for you on that.

MP King.

QUESTION 1: FAMILY PRESERVATION TIER II PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

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

Regarding the Family Preservation Programme, technically it is not really a new programme.

It is essentially the souped-up version of the CMIT [Cross Ministry Intervention Team] programme. Would I be correct in saying that?

The Speaker: The question is: Is it just an upgraded version of an old programme? Is that what you are asking?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, as opposed to *souped-up*. Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, let me see what the staff say about their souped-up programme.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, it is a programme that has been modelled off of the CMIT programme. I would say that it is a new programme because the CMIT programme has not been in place for a number of years. The staff, like I mentioned already in my Ministerial Statement, have undergone different extensive training for this particular programme and—

Mr. Robert King: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Robert King: The Minister has actually answered the question. She said yes, so I would like to get into my questions.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Robert King: No, no, no. Mr. Speaker, what the Minister said was that the question—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait. No, no. I'm saying, you said you got the answer you are looking for?

Mr. Robert King: Yes. The Minister basically said that it is essentially a new improved version of the CMIT programme, that the piece of —

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: The additional information was already shared before by the specific training.

The Speaker: Okay. So, you are satisfied you got your answer?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, yes, yes. That was fine.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Can I finish, please?

The Speaker: Minister, I am not sure where he got it, but he got the answer. You want to add to that?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, I would Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I just also want to add that the programme is definitely a modified version to address our current needs and our current trends and clients that we currently have relationships with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. All right. Thank you.

Member, do you now have a supplementary [question] you would like to put to that? Or a new question?

Mr. Robert King: I do. I do have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, sir.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that the programme has been improved, and it ought to be . . . In everything that we do we must seek improvement to make sure that we are meeting the needs of the community.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mr. Robert King: What specific key performance indicators are going to show that the programme has been successful?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that question.

Every family that engages within the services of Family Preservation Tier II undergoes assessments and benchmarks as well as an individual plan in which goals and objectives have to be achieved. And so, by those particular measures, Mr. Speaker, the team is able to collect data and to follow the progress of our families.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question? Second supplementary or new question?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

If we accept that the number of persons requiring services has increased, it would suggest that we need to determine what the problem is. Why are more persons in need of the service? So, what percentage of reduction in persons receiving services or requiring services is the Ministry seeking to achieve over the period

of 12 months? Is it a reduction of 10 per cent, 12 per cent, 25 per cent?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, this programme is a support programme for families who require that support. I am not going to make a prediction in regard to what the reductions would look like for particular families as we do see families fluctuate, come in for support. And they can be released, and then they can come back, or [be] discharged. But it is a programme to assist families when there are needs that . . . when their needs come about.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

There are your two supplementary [questions] on that. Would you like to ask the second question?

Mr. Robert King: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTION 2: FAMILY PRESERVATION TIER II PROGRAMME PROGRESS UPDATE

Mr. Robert King: Understanding that more persons are requiring services, the CMIT programme . . . what programme is it modelled off whether it be locally or other jurisdictions to show that this approach will work and achieve the required performance?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, in my Ministerial Statement I did speak to this being an intensive community-based model of family intervention recognising that every jurisdiction is different and has different characteristics. Mr. Speaker, the programme has pre- and post-assessment, pre- and post-interventions, and we will continue to track ongoing progress, which I will commit to come back to this House to share, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplemental or new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplemental.

The Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: If after two years the programme is receiving more . . . well, more persons are entering the programme than leaving it, what accountability and review measures or processes will be implemented to make sure that there is a reduction of persons requiring services? So, if after a year [or] two years, we are seeing more people entering, what review process will be

put in place to ensure that we are achieving the goal of having families who are empowered not requiring these specific intensive services? That is my final question.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

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

I do not see having more persons utilising this service as a bad thing, Mr. Speaker. We will probably see more families utilising the services because it was not a service that existed before. And so, we . . . You know, we should be hearing from our Members across the way that they, you know, [say] *Great!*, that this programme has now been put in place to support our families, Mr. Speaker. So, in two years I have no doubt that our numbers will increase, and we will also track like we do and report in our budgeting cycle families who are . . . what our intake is, and what our discharge rate is. And so, I will report back to this House particularly during Budget Debate in regard to what those numbers will look like.

The Speaker: Thank you. And the Member indicated he had no further questions.

Thank you.

Minister, that is the end of the questions for that Statement; however, there are questions on your second Statement that the Member wants to ask questions [about]. And again, it's MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your question for the second Statement?

QUESTION 1: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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

Will the Honourable Minister inform this Honourable House whether the Government has assessed whether the findings of the October 2025 Department of Corrections Panel Report raised any human rights concerns under the Human Rights Act 1981.

The Speaker: Premier . . . Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, that question is [a] very specific matter that I would have to take back to the Human Rights Commission, but I will endeavour to get to the answer for that question. I don't have that answer right now.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Supplementary or second question?

Mr. Robert King: Second question.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Mr. Robert King: Will the Honourable Minister advise which recommendations made by the Human Rights Commission in its 2023 and 2024 annual reports have been fully implemented by Government.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I would also ask for specifics as it relates to this. We are constantly . . . which you will see I tabled in the House today some changes to the human rights legislation and we work very closely with the Human Rights Office in advancing human rights legislation and policy.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

If complaints of discrimination continue to increase, does the Minister accept that Government's actions have yet achieved their intended outcome?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, discrimination is all around us. People stereotype, Mr. Speaker.

The Human Rights Commission has demonstrated in their annual reports the amount of work that they do put in into our community with educating. I think actually the work that they are putting in with educating our community and our public is increasing the number of questions and intake opportunities that do come through the Commission.

So, they are doing their work, Mr. Speaker, and they are educating our community. So, again, the increase in numbers is not necessarily a bad thing. If you also take the opportunity to read the report, you will see that many of the cases . . . the case summaries have been dropped. The matters have been worked out. Every opportunity to interact with the Human Rights Commission is an opportunity for education and reducing how people respect and discriminate against one another.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or third question?

Mr. Robert King: Third question.

The Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 3: HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Mr. Robert King: So, my question is: Does the Minister accept that when there are more persons who require services that this is an indication that the Ministry objectives are being achieved? So, more persons requiring government services is an indication that the approaches are working.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, people could be more aware of the services that are available and they are seeking support. Mr. Speaker, seeking support is not a bad thing

An Hon. Member: Say it again.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: It is not a bad thing. Our numbers are just reporting that more people are coming forward to get the support that they need, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary . . . second . . . That was your third question.

Mr. Robert King: Yes.

The Speaker: So, your first supplementary on your third question?

Mr. Robert King: First supplementary on the third question.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Would the Minister accept that the approach required to reduce the number of persons requiring the CMIT (Cross Ministry Intervention Team) intensive services would require a holistic approach that goes across other ministries working collectively to address the underlying concerns?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, these questions are supposed to be for the Human Rights Annual Report. We have finished the family preservation questions.

The Speaker: Yes. Keep . . . Yes, okay.

The Member acknowledged it. Fine. Okay.

Thank you, Member and Minister. Those are the final questions for that Statement.

However, the next Statement that has questions is the Statement by the Minister of Health. Minister, MP Pearman would like to put questions to you.

QUESTION 1: INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS, IMPLICATIONS ON ACCESS TO OVERSEAS MEDICAL CARE

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

I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister for her Statement today and I've raised my question with her in advance, so she is aware it is coming.

The Statement today used the expression "stop lists." It was in quotes. But there is a common misconception in Bermuda that there are such things as "stop lists" when in fact there are not. And I know that at least on our side we have had several meetings over the . . . since I've been an MP, with various representatives of the United States inviting us to really clarify that there are not such things as "stop lists." There are just restrictions on immigration. And I would invite the Minister just to clarify that for the general public.

Thank you.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable and Learned Member for that clarification. I did indicate that it was a commonly referred to language; however, to be precise, the correct US immigration law language is "inadmissibility or denial of entry." And I will endeavour to (a) correct the record and (b) use that terminology moving forward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No more questions? No?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Okay.

Members, that brings us to an end of the questions of the Statements today, which brings us to an end of the Question Period. Thank you for your participation, Members and Ministers.

And now we will move on to the next item on the Order Paper, which is the Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The President: Does any Member . . . MP Swan, would you like your three minutes?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead, sir.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by expressing profound condolences to the family of the late Rickai "Pugi" Raynor. I will associate all my colleagues and everybody in this entire House. [He] is the brother of my cousin, Honourable Minister Jache [Adams]. It was a very tragic loss, and it has hit his family

very, very hard. And I happen to know the Raynor family. I know the Adams family very well, Simmon's family. And I just pray that the comfort they need will be provided.

In looking at the paper, I recognise the face, Ms. Frances Smith Baker, who I knew from my Ariel Sands days running golf events for the Bermuda Government way back 40 years ago. And I looked, I said, she was the executive housekeeper for Ariel Sands. I just looked to make sure that somebody mentioned Ariel Sands. And there they were, the old Ariel Sands family, that great hotel property down on the South Shore that once was there, Mr. Speaker.

On a happier note, I had the honour of witnessing an historic victory of a young lady, age 19, win the Bermuda Ladies [Open] Championship [Division] on the same week that her mentor, who taught her at age eight, won the Bermuda Open Championship 48 years prior. And I caddied for her. Her name is Sienna Mosquera. She shot a record 67 on the second round of Port Royal [Golf Course]. She had such a big lead. Sometimes you have to imagine what you do when you are that far in front. But that's an experience you only get once in your life. And she won very admirably.

And overseas, Darina Betschart, who I witnessed put a golf club in her hand at age three, was down playing golf representing Bermuda in the Caribbean [Amateur] Junior [Golf] Championships where Bermuda is now a full member of that association in the Dominican Republic. And she won the Girls Under 15 Championship. Her brother, Oliver, has done great work in golf, being coached by a childhood colleague of mine, David Ogrin, who is in Texas.

And they both find themselves over there with their parents, who I salute the efforts of their parents, both of these children. The key to their success is their parental support, their talent, but the support that they get from their parents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Swan.

Junior Minister Lister, would you like your three minutes?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start off my three minutes by sending condolences to a number of families. And please, I do apologise if I do sound rushed.

Mr. Speaker, to the family of Ms. Carol Bassett, who passed recently. I associate Minister Darrell, Minister De Silva, and Minister Rabain—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will associate to whole House, Mr. Speaker.

Also, Mr. Speaker, to the family of Ms. Lorraine Simmons, who passed, mother of . . . I will associate MP De Silva.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will associate to the whole House again, Mr. Speaker.

[She is the] mother of a very well-known . . . Mr. Owen Simons, who is musically talented.

Also, I would like to also send condolences to the family of Ms. Tammoi Ann-Marie Simons, Mr. Speaker, who I attended church with and also Bermuda Institute for a time.

And then to a constituent of mine, I'd like to send condolences to the family of Mr. Coleridge Hayward. [I will] associate MP Wilmot.

And I'd like to also just associate condolences and remarks with the . . . associate my remarks with the condolences to young Rickai "Pugi" Raynor. So, Mr. Speaker, again, it's always sad to hear of when a person passes, no matter what age, so we would like to, again, send sentiments of condolences to the families.

On a lighter note, Mr. Speaker, this past week, I had the opportunity to attend two youth events. First of all, on this past Wednesday, and I will associate the Minister of Youth, [Social Development] and Seniors. (And please correct me if I got it wrong.) They held the Youth [Parliament] Debate on Wednesday in these Chambers where present Youth Parliament members got to debate against former Youth Parliament members, and the topic of the debate was: Should we lower the voting age to 16? [It was] a very good debate. Unfortunately, I wasn't there at the end to see who won the debate or find out who won the debate, but I think all speakers contributed well to it, and it's . . . you know, look forward for the young people of Bermuda . . . we have hope that there are young people interested in politics and can freely speak their mind on issues.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And I associate MP DeCouto, who was also in attendance.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I will associate Minister Rabain. This Sunday gone, I had the privilege to be a judge at the Alpha Beautillion where we had five contestants: Mr. [Max] Wallace from Somersfield Academy; Mr. Jaylen Mitchell from Mount Saint Agnes; Mr. Amiel Trott from Warwick Academy; Mr. Tobiah Goodchild from Saltus Grammar School; and the winner, Mr. (and I hope I got his name right) Ciaran Smyth of my alma mater, Bermuda Institute. So again, it's good to see young men participating and doing positive things and being recognised for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Junior Minister.

MP Robinson. MP Robinson, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise to associate myself with the condolences given. I know the Honourable Member Kim Swan had associated the House with the passing of Rickai Raynor. But I couldn't leave the House and head back to Riviera without extending specifically the condolences on behalf of Riviera and that community, which I am a part of, in its profound loss of Rickai, and how all of us noticing the water truck not in his yard has been quite jarring for most of us. And, you know, he also was one of the inspirations behind why my son is into electric bikes and dirt bikes. So, it is a loss that they are feeling profoundly. And the Riviera community has expressed it to Ms. Adams and to Mr. Tucker . . . Mr. Raynor, sorry, about their specific losses and instances that they had interactions with Rickai in the neighbourhood and how much of an impact he had on the surrounding area.

And as the MP, I couldn't park my car home and not have risen today to associate. In moments like this, it's important to remind ourselves that we are colleagues and that we can reach across the aisle in moments of tragedy like this and loss of life within each of our families and try to comfort one another and look out for each other during these tough times. So, I just send strength to Minister Adams' family in this tough time and hope that they are receiving the adequate support from all who knew Rickai.

And on a lighter note, I wasn't present last session but I'm sure that there were congratulations given to the graduation of The Berkeley Institute. But I had a special graduate, my little brother, who was involved in that. And I wanted to publicly give congratulations to the graduates of The Berkeley Institute and him specifically. And also, to the graduations of—

An Hon. Member: Say his name.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I am not going to say his name. He . . . he gets embarrassed.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And also, to associate myself with the graduation for CedarBridge Academy because—

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: That wasn't said.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, congratulations to the CedarBridge Academy graduates. My alma mater. I couldn't congratulate Berkeley without congratulating CedarBridge Academy. And I wish all of those students a bright and wondrous future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker, you have your three minutes.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. Good morning, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to the House and the listening public. I just have congratulatory remarks.

First of all, I would like to congratulate all of the recipients who received awards or scholarships from the Bermuda Hospitals Board. I will go ahead, even though she's not in her seat, and associate the Minister of Health.

The Speaker: She's right here. The Minister is here.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Oh, I didn't see . . . I do apologise. I couldn't see your hand.

[Laughter]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: I will associate the Minister of Health with these remarks.

The Speaker: All right.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: We need, especially when it comes to mental health and that the population of those suffering from mental health has grown. And so, we need our young Bermudians to definitely equip themselves in the field of health so that all of Bermuda benefits from that. So, I was happy to see that quite a few persons were recipients of the awards coming from the [Bermuda] Hospitals Board.

I would also like to associate . . . not associate myself, I would like to give congratulatory remarks to the recipients of scholarships from the Bermuda Arts Council. Again, you know, through culture, we are able to express our voices in many different ways regarding what goes on in the public at large. And it is good that we encourage our creatives to go out and do some of the work that they do.

And I would like to say a special congratulations to Mr. Devray Denwiddie, who is the father of my youngest grandchild. He was one of the recipients.

I would also like to associate myself with the graduation for CedarBridge Academy, because I had put that down to speak to first, but MP Robinson beat me to it. No. An excellent cadre of graduates. I think it was, I don't know if the current Minister can speak to the number of young people there. It was 90-something.

An Hon. Member: Ninety-two.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: It was 92 graduates. And we had . . . many of them received all sorts of scholarships. And so, it bodes well for our public schools. Our children are still doing a great job. And so . . . and I was delighted to see how many young people operated in a way that they were able to get so many of the private

scholarships as well as the public scholarships that we offer to our students. So, kudos to our young graduates.

And on that note . . . I'll associate the Minister of Education.

[Timer chimes]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: On that note, I take my seat, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP . . . Opposition Leader. MP Smith.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the congratulatory remarks that MP Foggo just gave on CedarBridge Academy's graduation. I also was in attendance there. Congratulations to all of them and what they'll be doing in the future.

But I would like to make special note of . . . there was a musical component between two young people that really showed a talent level that can—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: As somebody who grew up in a musical household, seeing those two young people sing the way they did. And we also got to hear the steel pans that played—really impressive. [I am] looking forward to seeing them maybe continue that on and bring music—Bermuda music—back, because I think that would be really important for us to continue to see that growth.

Mr. Speaker, I also like to give congratulations to a mother and son who are actually over in the UK dealing with football. First is Na'im Zuill, who has just been given . . . he is one of the scholars for the Bolton Wanderers. This is an Under-17 youth football player that has continued to progress. And this next step for him is encouraging as we have our young people in different places trying to take their sport prowess further. But with that, his mother has also just had the opportunity to become a football agent in the UK.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: It's a . . . it's a very difficult testing that they have to go through in order to reach that level. And only 5 per cent of sports agents for football are actually female. So, it's a double congratulations to Carla Zuill for that accomplishment.

An Hon. Member: Associate.

Hon. Ben Smith: And I associate—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: —everybody on our side for sure.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would not be able to take my seat if I did not give special birthday wishes to my mother—89 years old this year.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Ben Smith: And I know that as a strong Somerset woman, she'll be looking forward to us taking the Cup back later on this year.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Oh, no.

Hon. Ben Smith: She had on her red yesterday on her birthday. And I'm looking forward to her having that celebration.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay.

MP Weeks, you had jumped up before and up again.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Don't be saying anything about Somerset.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Did the Member sitting next to you congratulate Somerset? Did I hear?

[Laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: No, no, no, no.

The Speaker: It sounded like a prayer that time.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: No. She refuses to keep quiet too, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my heartfelt congratulations and deepest gratitude to Mr. Franco Harris for his outstanding research into gang violence, focusing specifically on the unique dynamics and challenges of island life in Bermuda.

Over the last few years, Mr. Speaker, when I sat in a different place, I have had the distinct pleasure of working closely with Mr. Harris, both locally here on the ground and remotely. Throughout this collaboration, his dedication, his professionalism and academic rigour have been nothing short of exemplary. It is also worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that Mr. Harris is currently completing his doctoral studies, and this vital research

forms a cornerstone of his advanced academic pursuits.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of Mr. Harris's work already extends far beyond our shores. He recently had the distinct honour of delivering a presentation on his findings in London to police commissioners from across the British Overseas Territories. This international platform underscores the global relevance of his research, proving that the insights gained here in Bermuda are helping to shape the policing and security discourse across the entire region.

Mr. Speaker, gang violence is a complex, multifaceted issue. What makes Mr. Harris's work so vital is its localised lens, examining how the distinct geographic, social and economic realities of an island's ecosystem shape these challenges. The insights he has generated have provided the Ministry of National Security with invaluable data and actionable perspectives. This is practical truth that will directly inform our policy development, Mr. Speaker, community outreach and strategic interventions moving forward.

So, on behalf of my former Ministry of National Security, and I will definitely associate those in the entire House and the Government of Bermuda, I want to formally thank Mr. Harris over these last couple of years for his tireless efforts. His work is a major asset to our ongoing mission to create a safer, more secure Bermuda. I ask this Honourable House to join me in congratulating Mr. Franco Harris on the successful completion of this vital study, celebrating this milestone in his doctoral journey and wishing him continued success in all of his future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.
Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to send congratulations to MP Michael Weeks for that beautiful black and gold tie that he's wearing today.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to be associated with the comments given for the passing of Ms. Carol Bassett. Ms. Carol Bassett was a long-time educator in the Bermuda public school system coming from the classroom all the way through the work that she did within the Department of Education. But, Mr. Speaker, she also leaves behind a teaching dynasty as her son, and I believe her two daughters are also teachers, or one daughter is also a teacher within the system. I'm not familiar with her daughter, but I do know of her son, Lavar, who was a critical member of the Education Reform Unit until he went back into the classroom over the last few years up at CedarBridge.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to send condolences to the family of Roland "Rocky" Darrell, long-time resident—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And I associate Robin . . .

The Speaker: Tucker.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: MP . . .

An Hon. Member: Tucker.

The Speaker: Tucker.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Tucker. [Mr. Darrell was a] long-time resident of the Devil's Hole area. Those of us who grew up down there, and I'm sure MP Tucker will find out there is a friendly rival between what we call "D'Alley" and South Shore. And I grew up on D'Alley, which is at Sommersall Road and Judkin Lane. But the Darrells are from Darrell's Oval, which we, fittingly, later on will be discussing something around Tucker's Town. And they grew up on Darrell's Oval, which is named after that family where some of the original cricket games for Eastern County actually took place over there.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to send congratulations again to all of the high schools that demonstrated . . . and associate myself with the congratulations to the graduates that walked across. But, Mr. Speaker, this was a special graduation. This graduation signalled the first cohorts that have passed through the new Signature Learning Programme system. And they are the first recipients of the Signature Learning diplomas. And so, this is a special moment in my previous stint in the world that I do occupy that was brought into fruition. And I was extremely proud to be able to witness the first recipients walk across the stage with those particular diplomas.

It was also a very special moment for me at CedarBridge in which I presented the inaugural Vincent Rabain Excellence in Trades Awards. We often talk about bringing trades back to our schools and trades and services is one of the Signature Learning programmes at the CedarBridge Academy, which specifically gives students an opportunity to expose themselves to the various trades throughout Bermuda. And I was privileged that the first recipient is studying to be an electrician, which my father was a certified master electrician.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the House to send a letter of condolences to the family of Ms. Paulette Smith. Ms. Paulette Smith was a constituent of mine, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: I'd like to associate MP Weeks. She was a constituent of mine. And I'd like to tell a brief story that many of us may have also encountered . . . that when I first started canvassing, Ms. Smith's house was one of the first houses that I attended. And she, if anyone knew her, was very sharp with her tongue and very direct in how she felt. And at first, I was taken aback and I said, *Oh, this is a little difficult*. But she would always reach out to me, and she would always send me messages of encouragement. And I'd go back to her house, and she'd be sharp with her tongue again. And I'd say to her, I'd say: *But, Ms. Smith, every time I come, you put my picture on your refrigerator*. So, at that point I knew that we were definitely building a relationship.

But it was the work that Ms. Smith did in the community, Mr. Speaker. She, if anyone knew her, she was, although very direct, she was also private. But she was open about her medical journey that she was going through at the later stages of her life. And not only did she speak on it, she took that into action. And she was a very, very valued volunteer at P.A.L.S., Mr. Speaker. And it was her . . . I know P.A.L.S. have been doing their walk for many, many years. But it was Ms. Smith who encouraged me a couple of years ago to start the P.A.L.S. walk. I continued it again this year. And if those of you would remember, I even took a visiting Minister with me this year.

And I had the fortunate (I guess some people would say unfortunate) kind of encounter where I was able to sit down and have a very lengthy conversation with her just maybe days or weeks before her passing. And I will say that she left a very clear message for me. She left a very clear message for her daughter. And I'd like to send condolences to them: her son, Anthony, and her daughter, Loukeisha, her grandchildren, Tre Shun, Ciana (who also helped with my campaign) [E] Amir and Kaius. But she left very clear instructions for all of us, what she wanted to be done after her time on this earth was complete. So, I just wanted to get up and send condolences to her family and say that Paulette Smith was definitely a huge part of my journey as I started to be a representative.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
MP DeCouto.

[Timer chimes]

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

I did previously associate with the Youth Parliament. Those who know me know I get quite set in my ways of thinking. And I did want to note that I was just about swayed by some of the arguments of the Youth Parliamentarians, and it was very impressive. So, thank you.

I did want to congratulate Bermudian sailor Sebastian Kempe. He won the Canadian Championship in the ILCA7, a.k.a., Laser sailboat. That would be a highly competitive—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, I associate MP Swan.

And for those who know, he is on a journey to qualify for the Olympics for Bermuda, and he is a former Youth Champion in that class as well. So, congratulations to him.

I also want to wish luck to Jessica Lewis. Most of you will know that she is a four-time Paralympian for Bermuda, and she will be attending the Commonwealth Games and competing in the 400 metres. And that is the first time these games are including para athletics. So, I want to wish her a lot of success. And of course, for the rest of the contingent, which is a long list of names, which will be familiar to many of us, so I will omit them for brevity.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Members, we are on that 12:30 mark. Are there any other Members who wanted to give a condolence briefly, or you want to wait until we come back and continue?

It looks like there are a few Members getting up. So, being there are a few Members getting up, I will suggest that we break now, and we will continue the condolences and congratulatory remarks when we return from lunch.

And Premier, would you like to just move the House to lunch?

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until 2:00 pm.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Members, the House now stands adjourned for lunch until 2:00 p.m.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:32 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:16 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. I trust everyone had a nice lunch break.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session for the afternoon session.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

[Continuation thereof]

The Speaker: Members, when we broke this morning, we were still on the matter of congratulations and condolence remarks.

Does any Member wish to continue on that?
MP Foggo, you are on your feet.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Ming, Ming.

The Speaker: I mean, MP Ming, geez.

[Member] Foggo, you're standing next to her, see?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Talking to her.

Go ahead, MP Ming.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker and listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, what a mistake to make. My guess is that fact that she's a St. George's girl—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: It's those two St. George's girls . . . it was those two St. George's girls. That is what it was.

Mrs. Renee Ming: We can let it fly. We'll let it fly for today.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mrs. Renee Ming: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to, first of all, offer condolences to the families of Sylvia Zuill and Dane Brown. Both are constituents of constituency 1. *[They]* have grown to, because they . . . Actually, both are not originally from St. George's, but they grew to love St. George's and call it home. And they will definitely be missed in and around the constituency.

And on a happier note, Mr. Speaker, I know this was said before, but I wanted to add to the comments. Constituency 1 hosted the 21st Dame Jennifer *[M.]* Smith Future Leaders Award Ceremony last week. And if you ever want to know what our young people are doing, I will tell you there are some out there—most of them, from my view, anyhow—are doing great things.

We had two people selected from each of the primary schools in the Parish of St. George's. So that would be East End Primary, St. George's Preparatory School, and St. David's Primary. East End Primary, there was Rasheva Smith and Daniel Mallory. It's funny, we're saying Rasheva because that's her correct name, but having her around the school for six years, we actually call her "Sheevy" so much.

From St. George's Preparatory School was Ryan Millett and Jaravano Williams. And for St. David's Primary, we have Kenzie Pitcher-Wade and Rie Simons. These young people, guys, if you heard the résumés or the bios [biography] and just look at the things that they do in school, outside of school, academically, athletically, they had community service. They were doing some great and awesome, wonderful things. But the real thing of why they were selected is because even at a young age, they have demonstrated early leadership skills. And so for that, they were honoured at the ceremony.

I would also like to congratulate The St. George's Collection. They held a fashion show yesterday at the Hillcrest Boutique Hotel. What an awesome place to actually have a fashion show. The businesses from St. George's that were involved in that were The Things We Love, English Sports Shop, Frangipani, and Dreamscape [Designs]. And if you ever get a chance, and you should make sure because it's where you all came from, come down, have a look, and see what it is that St. George's has to offer. I'd like to associate MP Foggo with these comments as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you listening audience.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Ming.

Minister Furbert, would you like to make your contribution now?

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the comments in regard to the Youth [Parliament] Debate. Mr. Speaker, a well-done event always gives our young people the opportunity to show us how they perform. And indeed, they did teach us many things, I would say, about the form of debate, both the current Youth Parliamentarians and former Youth Parliamentarians who did an excellent job. So, I would like to congratulate them and, of course, the team of the Office of Youth Affairs who assisted with organising and putting that event on.

I would also like to take the opportunity to congratulate the graduates of the Happy Valley [Child] Care Center. There are about 16 young ones who participated in a leaving ceremony who will be going on to our public preschools and private preschool programmes. Congratulations to them and, of course, the

hard-working staff that provide quality early childhood education programmes for our young people.

I also, Mr. Speaker, would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and congratulate . . . We all got an email, I believe, in regard to a young Bermudian, 25-year-old, Anthasia Campbell, who was participating in a beauty pageant in England, which I believe occurred on July 12. I don't know the outcome of that pageant, but I would assume that there were many applicants and selections that would make it difficult for Ms. Campbell to reach where she did reach. And so, a big congratulations to her and acknowledgement for our very own Bermudian, who was born and bred in Bermuda, who was selected to participate in this pageant.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP Tucker, you have your three minutes.

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

I would like to associate with the congratulations given with regard to the Youth [Parliament] Debate and as well as the comments made for Ms. Campbell.

I would also like to express condolences to the family of Mr. Roland "Rocky" Darrell. I was associated earlier this morning in our morning session. Minister Weeks and Minister Rabain would also like to be associated as well, even though Minister Rabain associated me earlier.

And I also would like to express condolences to the family of Mrs. Josephine Reynolds. I've known Mrs. Reynolds for a number of years, as her granddaughter and my daughter were in high school together. And I actually got my grandmother name from Mrs. Reynolds, when . . . My grandmother name is Lita. And my daughter's friend, who's Asia Ming-Raynor, used to call her grandmother, (Mrs. Reynolds) Lita.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Robin Tucker: And, oh, and MP—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Did she? Okay, so—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, I'd associate—

The Speaker: Member, you want to add some more contributions to that?

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to associate MP Foggo and MP Smith—

The Speaker: Yes, do that for them.

Ms. Robin Tucker: —with those comments as well. Sorry, I beg your pardon, MP Swan.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: And just, again, express condolences to Joyce, that's Mrs. Reynolds's daughter, Joyce Ming, and as well as Mrs. Reynolds's granddaughter, Asia Ming-Raynor.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Does] any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? None other?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.

Before we move on, I'd just like to add my remarks and the condolences that were sent earlier to the Bassett family on the passing of Ms. Carol Bassett. Yes, much was said about her contribution to education. I've known her from that perspective. I have also known her from her church community, and I know her family personally, so I know her loss will be felt from all quarters that she had a presence in. So, my remarks will be added to those that have been expressed already.

Thank you, Members. We'll now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: We have Government Bills and Opposition Bills to be introduced today.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: The first of the Government Bills is introduced in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

BILLS

FIRST READINGS

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I move the following Bills to their first reading so they may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: [Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026](#) and the [Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would you like to do the second matter . . . Oh, don't move. That's right, the tax, okay.

The third item is from the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the [Human Rights Amendment Act 2026](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

And the next item is in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the [Bermuda Health Council \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Act 2026](#).

The Speaker: And the next is in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs and it will be presented on her be-

half by the Minister of [Public] Works [and Environment].

BILL

FIRST READING

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the [Cost of Living Commission Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2026](#).

The Speaker: Thank you, Members.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: We have one Opposition Bill in the name of the Member MP Richardson.

Would you like to present your Bill at this time?

STANDING ORDER 28(1)

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, per the provisions of Standing Order 28(1), I move for leave to introduce and read a Bill for the first time by its title only.

The Speaker: Continue.

FIRST READING

ROAD TRAFFIC AND MOTOR CAR (ROAD SAFETY AND PENALTIES) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the [Road Traffic and Motor Car \(Road Safety and Penalties\) Amendment Act 2026](#).

The Speaker: Thank you.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTION

ENDING HOMELESSNESS TOGETHER, PLAN TO END HOMELESSNESS

The Speaker: We have a Notice of Motion from the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I propose to move the following motion at the next day of meeting.

That this Honourable House consider and approve the "Plan to End Homelessness—Ending Homelessness together," which was tabled in the House of Assembly on the 27 March 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That brings us to the close of the Notices of Motions and Bills today. We now move on to the next item.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: And the first Order to be done today is the consideration of the [Contributory Pensions \(Amendment of Contributions and Benefits\) Order 2026](#) in the name of the Premier and the Minister of Finance. Minister.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Members and the listening audience, the Premier is just getting himself ready to present.

So, Members and the listening audience, we will now hear from the Premier on the introduction of this matter.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that consideration be given to the draft Order entitled the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 37 of the Contributory Pensions Act 1970.

The Speaker: Any objections?

None.

Continue, Premier.

DRAFT ORDER

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS) ORDER 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, the . . . sorry . . .

Mr. Speaker, on this particular matter, we are discussing the Contributory Pensions (Amendment [of Contributions and Benefits] Order, which reflects this Government's continued commitment to keep our

promise to make sure that we increase pensions by the rate of inflation every single year.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry?

Every year. Yes, every year.

Mr. Speaker, I do not need to speak to you or others about the contribution that our seniors have made to this country. And therefore, it is no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that this Government remains committed to increasing pensions by the rate of inflation every year, which is something that we promised inside of our Election Manifesto. We recognise the many challenges that seniors will face due to rising costs, and our goal is to provide continued support so they can live in dignity, as they deserve.

And it's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that pensions are just one aspect of that. Whether it's financial assistance, whether those are the other things of which we have done, whether or not they are public sector retirees, where they have seen an increase in that as well, Mr. Speaker, these are the things of which this Government continues to do to ensure that we pay homage and make sure that the relationship between the Government and the seniors of this country remains a sound one.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda offers retired individuals a combination of social insurance benefits from the Contributory Pension Fund [CPF] and a mandatory employer-sponsored occupational pension. Ideally, the social insurance benefit serves as the first tier, or basic pension, which a second tier occupational pension should supplement. However, many retirees are not receiving occupational pension, through no fault of their own. And this situation is mainly because occupational pensions were not mandatory until 1999 when the [National Pension Scheme \(Occupational Pensions\) Act \[1998\]](#) was enacted. As a result, some retirees rely solely on social insurance benefits for their income.

Mr. Speaker, this situation could be better. And the Government continues to work to ensure that seniors who rely heavily on their social insurance benefits do have a dependable source of income. But it should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that individuals who are still having challenges, who may not have occupational pensions can always, of course, avail themselves of the other social assistance programmes that are available, including financial assistance.

Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding what I have just said, the CPF benefit provides an important base for retirement income. Currently, the maximum pension paid under the CPF is about 29 per cent of the median annual gross earnings for Bermudians, as indicated in the Bermuda Job Market Employment Brief produced by Department of Statistics in [October] 2025. This compares closely with the United Kingdom, where the full basic state pension as a percentage of average earnings is about 30 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Order is to increase pensions and other benefits under the Contributory Pensions Act 1970 by 1.74 per cent as of 16 August 2026, when increases are typically made to the benefits. Per the government actuary, the 1.74 per cent increase in benefits would represent a small negative impact on the fund.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members are advised that according to the Consumer Price Index, the cost of living increased by 1.74 per cent from September 2024 to August 2025. This figure represents the average year-to-date change since the last benefit increase. Therefore, the proposed benefit increase fully covers the prevailing rate of inflation to ensure that our seniors are not disadvantaged.

Mr. Speaker, there are five types of benefits payable under the Contributory Pensions Act 1970. All the pensions and allowances will be increased by 1.74 per cent. These pensions and allowances are:

- contributory old age pension;
- contributory widows' [and] widowers' allowance;
- contributory disability benefits;
- non-contributory old age pension; and
- non-contributory disability benefits.

Mr. Speaker, the current maximum basic contributory pension is \$1,206.00 per month. The average contributory pension currently payable, which includes additional increments added to the basic pension, is approximately \$1,323.00 a month. Altogether, some 15,086 persons are currently receiving benefits underneath this Act. The proposed 1.74 per cent increase will raise the maximum basic contributory pension to \$1,227.00 a month. And with additional increments, the average benefit will increase to approximately \$1,346.02 per month. Beneficiaries, Mr. Speaker, can . . . sorry, let me just make sure I've got this right, Mr. Speaker. Beneficiaries can expect to see a 1.74 per cent increase in their regular monthly payment for the 15th of each month, starting on September 15, 2026.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am proud of the fact that this 1.74 per cent increase marks the eighth pension increase—yes, Mr. Speaker, you heard correctly, the eighth pension increase—the Progressive Labour Party Government has put through in its time in Government, which is in stark contrast, as I think we have heard many times today, to the former Government who made our seniors wait five years for a pension increase while telling them that money did not grow on trees. As a reminder, Mr.—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, they only did it in an election year. Yes, in an election year. That was it. So, every other year, *seniors, no, no, no*. And when election time

came coming, they are like, *Here, have an increase*. An increase, by the way, Mr. Speaker, that did not match the rate of inflation.

But importantly, Mr. Speaker, this Government is different. This Government will keep its promises. And for the history, just remember, this is what we have done since 2017. In August of 2017, just one month after being elected, we kept our promise to increase pensions by 1.75 per cent. In August of 2018, Mr. Speaker, 1.4 per cent. In August of 2019, Mr. Speaker, 1.2 per cent. In August of 2021, Mr. Speaker, 2.75 per cent. And that increase was slightly higher than the prevailing rate of inflation. In August 2023, Mr. Speaker, 4.1 per cent to account for change in 2022, and 2023 In 2024, Mr. Speaker, a 2.4 per cent increase. And in 2025, a 2.3 per cent increase. And today we are passing our eighth increase of 1.74 per cent effective on the 16 August 2026.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, this Government does keep its promises to our seniors. And guess what, Mr. Speaker? I know there are a lot of speakers who actually listen to us and they note and recognise the difference in approaches that governments take. One government makes sure that we take care of our seniors, increasing their benefits, whether that be through social assistance, whether it be through pensions, whether that be through retirement benefits, or whether or not that be through other measures, Mr. Speaker. And we know, recognise, and understand the approach that was taken by the Opposition party when they were in Government.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Honourable Premier is imputing improper motive by implying that the One Bermuda Alliance does not take care of the people. As we have well established in this House, the prior Government, prior to the prior OBA Government, had spent so much money and incurred such a deficit, a loan had to be taken out just to pay the Government employees.

[Inaudible interjections]

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Shadow Minister of Finance should know that he is clearly misleading the House on his point of order. And, Mr. Speaker, he should know that not everything is imputing improper

motive because we can say what our views and our opinions are.

But here's the fact, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is so misleading and so misled and so confused that he does not even realise that pensions are not paid out of the Consolidated Fund.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: They are paid out of the Contributory—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: —Pension Fund, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker!

The Speaker: Point of order. Point of order.
Let me recognise your point of order.
What's your point of order, Member?

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER
[Unparliamentary language]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Standing Order 19(11)(d). The Premier is using insulting and disrespectful language.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I invite him to politely retract his colour commentary, which is not necessary.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, the pensions are funded out of another pot. And as we will hear from my remarks later, they are running out of money under this Government and will run out short of Government action. Thank you.

The Speaker: Mr. Premier, I know you are clever enough to not cause the gentleman to keep jumping on his feet.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, he's going to jump up as much. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? I'm going to say what I want to say in this House, Mr. Speaker, because I know by the laws.

The Speaker: Within . . . within . . . within the confines. Within the confines—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, I will note and understand that you did not rule my comments out of order, Mr. Speaker, so I shall continue.

So, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: I'm asking you to be guided in how you put your comments—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I absolutely can.

The Speaker: Be respectful . . . we are respectful that it's an opinion, but your opinion cannot necessarily be throwing stones every place—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I take your point. But here is the reality, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member got up on a point of order, his same tired point of order around matters that are related to, *Oh, salaries, oh, woe is me, what's it called*, without recognising and remembering that the largest deficits in the country's history occurred under their watch, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: Under their watch. It was them who said they were going to borrow \$800,000 . . . \$800 million to last for five years, and it only lasted for three.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And they had to go back, Mr. Speaker. But here's the thing.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. Here's what's important.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: When it comes to contributory pensions, they, Mr. Speaker, *they*, Mr. Speaker, refused to give seniors a pension increase. It had nothing to do with paying civil servants. It had everything to do with their philosophy and approach to governance.

POINT OF ORDER *[Misleading]*

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Premier is intentionally misleading the House. Because our philosophy is not to deny benefits, and he knows it. Our philosophy is to ensure that the pension fund is robust and can last, unlike this current pension fund, which is going to run out of money without further action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: It is your opinion it doesn't have to be reflected—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the record is clear. Four years they did not increase pensions. Why are they getting upset that we're telling the truth?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: What do they want? What word do they wish to use? Their *approach* to governance. Their approach to governance was: We are not going to give seniors a pension increase. That was their approach. Their approach to government was—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: —that we are going to—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order. Point of order.
Give your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER *[Misleading]*

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier continues to intentionally mislead the House, because I have laid out for you, Mr. Speaker, speaking as the Shadow Minister of Finance, the OBA philosophy, and he can stick to the facts. It is correct that pensions could not be increased, and I have explained—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and I have explained—

The Speaker: Members, Members, Members.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —why they had not been increased. But that is not a philosophy, Mr. Speaker, that is not a philosophy of not increasing.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: That is a philosophy of ensuring pension payments—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —can continue to be paid over a longer period of time.

The Speaker: Okay. Okay. Thank you.

Let me add in on this. The comments that were being made were speaking to a historical—

An Hon. Member: Approach.

The Speaker: —approach that was done in the past, and using the reference to a historical approach, which is clear on what was said and done during that time period. And that's the reference that is being made.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am going to take every single time that I get up in this Honourable House of Assembly to talk on this particular matter to make sure that I am clear that the people of this country remember the approach of the One Bermuda Alliance in Government. They came into office, and for four years told seniors, *No, you're not gonna get an increase.*

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they did.

Hon. E. David Burt: *No, you are not going to get an increase. No, you are not going to get an increase. No, you are not going to get an [increase].*

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: And here's the fact, Mr. Speaker, when they are reminded about it, they stand up *point of order, point of order, point of order*, and make every excuse of which they wish, Mr. Speaker. If they wanted to increase pensions, they would have done so, like this Government has. But no, Mr. Speaker, they chose not to. That is the record. Whatever you want to ascribe to it, approach, philosophy, views, take it. Whatever it is called, Mr. Speaker, the reality is they would not increase pensions for seniors until election year. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker. *Those are the facts.*

I hear no point of order on those facts, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Those are the facts.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right, so let's keep going, Mr. Speaker, because that's where it is. And where we find ourselves now, Mr. Speaker, is a significant increase in the pensions which are being given to our retirees,—

Hon. Ben Smith: We need more.

Hon. E. David Burt: —because that is the record of a Government that—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is rich. We hear from the . . . we hear, Mr. Speaker, we hear from the Opposition Leader: *We need more.* But then he sat as part of a party that didn't give any.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, let me continue—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —let me continue to press ahead.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House because there were increases made, which he had said himself. So, I definitely invite him to retract that factual comment. Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let me move on, because this is just—

The Speaker: And it were factual he just asking you to clear it up.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the record is clear. They gave one pension increase in five years on the eve of an election. That's the record. That's what they did.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And we make sure that our seniors keep up with the rate of inflation. Theirs did not even match the rate of inflation.

I'm surprised they don't just, you know, just—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Keep quiet.

Hon. E. David Burt: —keep quiet because it gives me more opportunities to remind the people of this country the difference in approach,—

An Hon. Member: Oh, yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —the difference that it makes when you have a Government that actually believes in

keeping its promises and believes in increasing seniors' pensions by the rate of inflation.

And, Mr. Speaker, so I laid through the history of the times of which we've done this year after year after year after year. And in every case which this Government has increased benefits for our seniors, the increase has been in line with or exceeded the prevailing rate of inflation, thereby placing seniors' pensions under the Consumer Price Index and in good stead.

Mr. Speaker, in the 2026 increase in benefits accompanied by an increase in contributions per the government actuary of the contributions is to be increased by 2.5 per cent per annum more than benefits. This is estimated to continue to make sure that the fund remains healthy. Mr. Speaker, you should also note that contributions last increased in August 2025 by 4.81 per cent. That was again, 2.5 percentage points more than the increase in benefits. And the Ministry of Finance will continue to manage the CPF's position. The proposed increase in contributions for employees and employers is 4.25 per cent which is 2.51 per cent more than the benefits increase proposed for the year. The effective date for the contribution increase is August 2026.

Mr. Speaker, currently the weekly contribution rate is \$75.30 for individuals under the age of 35 and \$37.65 for those over the age of 65. The proposed increase of 4.25 per cent will raise weekly contribution rates to \$78.50 for individuals under 65 and to \$39.25 for individuals over 65. This increase in weekly contributions amounts to \$3.20 per week, Mr. Speaker, which is \$1.60 when split between employer and employee.

Mr. Speaker, the pension reform work is developing options to sustainably address and secure future benefits. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, as we said, we have managed to fix the Public Sector Superannuation Fund [PSSF] by making sure to extend its life and putting it in a positive position that has enabled us to then go ahead and to give retirement benefits to public sector retirees, which we debated the last time in this House. Mr. Speaker, in reference to our Throne Speech commitments on matters related to the work and as stated inside the budget, the Government is committed to tabling a Position Paper in regard to our approach for social insurance reform or the reform of the Contributory Pension Fund. Those particular matters will be set out.

The actuaries are currently actually either on Island this week or next week going through a series of meetings and reviews on the matter that we did on all of the previous pension reform items. Because it is important that we fix these particular funds for the long term, as this Government has done with the most important one, which is the Public Sector Superannuation Fund, which removed a \$2 billion unfunded liability from the Government's balance sheet.

Mr. Speaker, just to speak to the fund itself, the fund as of 31 March 2026 had net assets of over \$2.36

billion representing approximately 10 times the value of benefits paid in this fiscal year in 2025/26. The effect of this, [is that if] the CPF received no further contribution [it could] continue to pay out pensions [at] the prevailing rate for almost 10 years. However, the reality is contributions will continue through time and will be increased from time to time. Consequently, prudent investment of pension funds is an important factor in the fund's financial position.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, the Government's sound investment strategy for pension fund assets is achieving good results. And as of 31 March 2026, the Contributory Pension Fund investments stood at \$2.211 billion. The nominal rate of return for the 10 years preceding 31 March 2026 was 7.4 per cent. Mr. Speaker, as evidenced by the 2023 actuarial report tabled in this Honourable House on 4 March 2025, the viability of the fund in the short- to medium-term is good with the fund being positive for the next 19 years, until 2042.

However, in addressing the long-term challenges associated with pensions generally, as we said, we are going to make sure that we bring forward a Position Paper on these particular changes. It is noted, Mr. Speaker, that the funding policy of the CPF is based on sustainable funding rather than full actuarial funding. And that is that contributions plus investment income should cover benefits and administration expenses on an annual basis while the fund builds sufficient reserves to cover years of benefits and expenses and to withstand future adverse circumstances. That is something that is standard with these types of funds, Mr. Speaker. So, it is important to recognise that though a fund may not be 100 per cent funded, you want to make sure it's sustainable because you're recognising, of course, that there are contributions that are going to continue to come in.

Mr. Speaker, as we note, though there is a positive short- to medium-term outlook, we do know that there is the work that needs to be done to stabilise the Contributory Pension Fund, which means that there is going to be a various number of measures. I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, that the measures that were put forward from our actuaries are actually broader than the initial set of measures that were done, which I think will actually result in . . . when the Position Paper that does come, following its approval by the Cabinet, to this Parliament, we will see, Mr. Speaker, a wider range of options where we can actually move forward and actually fix this issue for the future as well.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to making sure that we deal with those particular matters because it's important that this Government continue its record of striking the right balance between social and fiscal responsibility. But the right balance, in our eyes, Mr. Speaker, is to keep faith with the seniors of this country, ensuring that we increase their pensions every year by at least the rate of inflation. And that, Mr. Speaker, is the record of this particular Government.

So, in closing, I wish to assure Members again and, more importantly, current and future pensioners, that the Government recognises the challenges they face. We will continue to take the appropriate and decisive steps to enhance benefits paid from the National Pension Plan and ensure the fund has the ongoing ability to pay for such benefits in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, if I can, because I think that it's important to note that on a monthly basis, since we have come into office, the maximum contributory pension has increased by \$271 a month, Mr. Speaker. That is over three . . . sorry, that is over \$3,000 a year. Those are the changes that matter when you keep your promise by increasing the rate of pensions by the rate of inflation to ensure that persons have more money in their pockets, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality. That is this Government's record, and I commend this Statement to the House and look forward to the support from the Opposition unless they want to be recorded as, once again, not supporting an increase to seniors' pensions.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.
Opposition spokesman.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

The Speaker: MP DeCouto, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, first of all, Mr. Speaker, I have to correct the Premier's incorrect statement because if a government feels it doesn't have the money to pay the pensions, that doesn't mean they don't support increases. That means they couldn't put together—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We, in this House, while we have been Opposition, have supported the pension increases.

So, the listening public needs to hear that. [We] have supported the pension. And we support this. But the public needs to hear some important stuff.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The public needs to hear some important stuff.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, Members.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: As we know, based on the actuary reports, the current social insurance, or CPF, [Contributory] Pension Fund, will not be able to make full payments after 2042. Now, Mr. Speaker, that means if you are like me, if you are working today, in the absence of actual change, personally, I would not count on having that full amount of money.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You don't have to. You have a trust fund baby.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier—

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Members, Members, Members!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Members, Members—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members. Wait, wait! Members, Members. Members!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members . . . Deputy [Premier].

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: That's unnecessary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Deputy [Premier].

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I take, I take extreme personal prejudice.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, we've been in a good tone. There has been a little humour, but don't take it below that, please. Because things get . . . we know how sensitive things can be to individuals, and we have seen it in the past, and we don't want a repeat of it.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's one thing to hurl invective—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Ah! Ah!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and it's another thing for it to be . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —badly intentioned and incorrect.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Members, let's let the afternoon go smoothly without us having to get caught up inside conversations that are going to naturally, by the tone of the comment, lead us in the wrong direction. Let's put that to rest now.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be guided by your remarks, of course.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Members, Members.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —I'm here to discuss policy.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

Members, I was serious just now. I was real serious. We have seen how these take us down the wrong tone, and emotionally, people get bent out of shape. We are heading down a track right now that can lead us in that same space. We have seen it happen in the past. We don't need to go down that road again, okay?

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

Back to the matter at hand: the social insurance or the Contributory Pension Fund, which some people rely on, especially older people. As I was saying, because we know from the most recent actuary reports, this fund will no longer be able to make its full payments in 2042, which means, basically, if you are still working today and you are middle-aged or younger, in the absence of actual action from this Government, my personal advice is do not factor that too deeply into your retirement plans.

The Premier said he's committed to tabling a Position Paper. Well, we will listen when they table an actual amendment or an actual change in laws or actual finances. But until then, it's just a lot of hot air, Mr. Speaker. A lot of hot air. Because we would love to cut cheques. But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the pension money, it doesn't grow on trees. The pension money doesn't grow on trees.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know where the money comes from, Mr. Speaker? It comes out of the pockets of the working people. So, if you're working today, [it] is the money you pay into the pension fund today that pays for the payments to go to other people. And so, we noted that although the increases are only 1.74 per cent, the deductions are 4.25 per cent. And I say "only" because I think the Premier said: *Oh, they're now doing \$270 extra a month.* That's great. We know most peo-

ple's health care costs, as set by the Government, have gone up more than that. So, they're looking at this and going, *Well, okay. But I'm still short. I'm still short.* And the Premier doesn't want to talk about that. Okay?

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: This does not cover the increases in the cost of living that people are seeing in health care and insurance. And as you know, Mr. Speaker, we have come up here and we have proposed a lot of specific things on how Government could actually adjust health care costs instead of letting a lot of CIT money . . . but the Government has allowed CIT money to go into the pockets of the insurance company shareholders while increases are—

Hon. E. David Burt: We are back to this again, Mr. Speaker? Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: Come on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with the greatest of respect, if you're going to assign the Government benches a certain standard, the same standard must be held on that side, Mr. Speaker. We ruled on that last week, the last time, and he's gone back there again, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, yes, I got you. I got you. I got you. I got you. I got you, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: He's misleading the House. There is no money that has gone from CIT to shareholders, Mr. Speaker, none.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I got you. That matter had come up the last time, and it was clarified the last time around.

And . . . wait, wait. Before you got on your feet, I just wanted people to understand that once it's been clarified that it isn't the case, then we need not to bring it up as if it is the case. Unless you have proof of something different, the way it has been stated was accepted and that's what it was. Okay?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Well, we know it's a matter of public record that that company's accountants have booked a \$20 million-plus credit, due to CIT, and that company will also be spending \$20 million on a share of buyback for the shareholders. I leave it to the public to do the math. I leave it at that.

And I was talking about the cost of insurance to everybody who's receiving the social insurance. They have to buy maybe vehicle insurance, maybe insurance for their house. And of course, we know about the health insurance costs, which the Government has increased, and those costs have really outpaced the social insurance costs.

So, look, we're glad to see the increase. We support the increase. But we know that until we see specific actions (right?) to fix this fund up, like had to be done for the public servants' fund, this is like a major ticking time bomb for the working person today. And we are on the record saying, because it's sort of a critical piece of national concern, Mr. Speaker, we would use CIT money, for example, to help ease the transition in whatever changes, not perhaps on an ongoing basis, but to ease and smooth the transition. Because we know that for many of the public servants, the PSSF changes were, for some of them, a bit of a shock. So, you can imagine maybe putting some funds in there.

So now where was I going with that?

An Hon. Member: You are right.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am right, Mr. Speaker, and you heard it here from the Government benches. I'm right.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Now, what he said, the fund remains healthy. I don't know about you, Mr. Speaker, but my pension fund running out in 18 years, I don't consider healthy. But I guess that's a matter of opinion. I will leave it to the Premier to have his own opinion on that.

Like I said, we are deeply concerned about the lack of progress on the social insurance reform. We talked about the cost of living. Again, everybody in Bermuda knows these costs of living statistics, the CPI, which comes out so after the fact, [it] doesn't really match what people are feeling. And we talked about the health insurance. We talked about the other insurance. We talked about food. Housing, Mr. Speaker. Now I know the Government's making some efforts there and broadly, it's the right direction. Although, you know, we have a lot of feedback on that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, to make it sound like this 1.74 per cent is going to be life-changing, is not the case.

An Hon. Member: What?

Another Hon. Member: They need more.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We know people need more and that is why this fund needs to be reformed pronto. And we know that the Premier won't be around here from October as Premier, so I hope that his successor, whoever that will be, can put this to the top of the agenda because it is one of the most important things.

The other key issue with this fund, Mr. Speaker . . . okay, obviously there's the money going in that comes out of taxpayers' pockets, nothing comes on trees. It comes out of the working person's pocket, out of their pay cheque, that goes in. Okay? [It] is the demographic issue. Okay? We know that Bermuda has an ageing population and that the number of working people compared to the number of people retiring is growing and that's another huge pressure on the fund. And we know that from my leader's, the Opposition Leader's, questions earlier today. We know there's a serious issue with the total population demographics and how that impacts things like shared funds, like social insurance, health insurance, things like that.

So, another key issue will be how can Government get this economy going so there are more working people paying into these funds that will make them healthier. Because frankly, our belief is that the number of working people is lower than people think, and of course we have the census and we do not know, but most people feel that the population has declined. And I suspect that this fund may be in more trouble than people think.

So let me wrap it up there, Mr. Speaker, and summarise as [follows]: Yes, we support. We all like to write cheques to help people out. But I think I've highlighted a couple of key issues that we think the Government needs to be moving a lot more rapidly on with a lot higher sense of urgency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

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

Any other Member?

MP Swan, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, let me declare my interest. I am a senior. And the Honourable Member who just took his seat, refers to the pension increase as merely someone writing cheques. I beg to differ. I beg to differ for the simple reason of the . . . I know people get tickled-up when I use this type of analogy. The ethos of a PLP Government committed to doing for working-class persons, and a business-minded, conservative government, or want-to-be government, that will do things that might not necessarily carry the better interest of the ordinary folk.

And people say: *Yes, that I not true, Swaney. We understand folk and we are out there.* But I remember being one time on a jury when a young lawyer and her actions spoke louder than words. I will never forget that. That was . . . that . . . that . . . and it just so happens the young lawyer is in this Honourable House as Minister of Health. She gave a compelling presentation. There were some multiple persons on trial.

I just want to say this, that if a government can prioritise and use what it inherited as the reason for making sure that seniors did not receive increases in a five-year period, but found the money to make sure that . . . and I love sailing. So let nobody . . . I come from a family that sails, fishes and farms. Could find the money to fund that to the tune of \$100 million.

An Hon. Member: No!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is a different mind-set. And when I say that if we look at where we came from to get there, we had just come from a global pandemic, Mr. Speaker. I heard people saying they left us with nothing. Let me tell you this: That between 2000, between 2001 to about 2006, the country . . . and Mr. Speaker, you would know this better than anybody in this House—

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —enjoyed the most buoyant economic time ever.

And I have seen some governments in the past that have done some good things as well. It is a story for another day. Some folks do not like the fact that I am not afraid to talk about it. But I will say this: When the recession hit in 2008, many persons in this country did not even accept that there was a recession. Do you know who did?

Now, I may get this wrong, but I attended a meeting down at the bottom floor, just below where my studio is. And I declare my interest. I work for Inter-Island Communications, doing it once a week now, one hour. But I have a lovely radio show. I have been a part of that family for over 10 years. But there is a tri-annual (Am I right, Honourable Minister?) conference that is held by . . . it might even be the [Bermuda] Trade Union Congress [BTUC]. And do you know . . . I believe at that event unionised hotel workers accepted a pay freeze. Unionised hotel workers accepted a pay freeze before everybody else was saying: *There is no recession. You are just making it up. PLP is causing that.* Ask me how I would know that. Sometimes you have been around long enough to know what mind-set was propelling that argument at the same time. Okay?

So, a government that was in buoyancy . . . and I will say this. The late Mr. C. Eugene Cox had a fund that I wish during that buoyancy time would have been further supplemented. I certainly believed in that fund. It would have helped insulate Bermuda. The Gov-

ernment invested in people. My colleagues back 10 years prior to that when confronted before recession, made sure that my Portuguese cousins went home. Okay? I remember that too because a lot of those I had gotten to know. Okay?

So let us go forward now. And what am I talking about, Mr. Speaker, 2008/09, 2009/10, 2010/11. Decisions made in boardrooms tore the heart of this country. You do not hear that talked about. You do not see reports written about that. You do not hear people talking about the fact that the brightest of the bright in this country made poor business decisions that tore the heart out of this country economically. Tore the heart out of this country economically. So much so, Mr. Speaker, so much so that a labour government came to a United Bermuda Party Opposition, wanted to hold hands together because they were going to bail out who? The Bank of Butterfield! To the tune of a quarter of a billion dollars.

And I knew many legacy families who had a lot of wealth in this country, who I am sure look at the PLP a little bit differently today than they did there, [that] came to the rescue. Do not let me get started. I cannot go down that road because the same bank that the PLP rescued does not necessarily rescue its pensioners and some of its employees the same way.

I declare my interest: My 93-year-old mother is a pensioner of that organisation. Served her life there, working alongside people like former Member of Parliament Colin Benbow, who was in the Educational Officer, with people like Mr. Brock, and the like.

[Crosstalk]

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I am here to say this: That when you look at the context of what took place between 2008 and 2012 . . . sorry, Madam [Deputy] Speaker, when you look at what took place between 2008 and 2012, there is no reason why deficit spending occurred. The Government had no choice. And yes, when Members would come, and Honourable Member Cannonier would know better, having been the Premier in 2012, that he had to make decisions based on [it], and recalibrate and work through it. So, I could accept that he could not find an increase in 2013/14. But 2015, 2016 and 2017, to finally come up in 2017 on the eve of an election does not show that seniors factored into the mind-set at that particular time.

Now, what does that mean? [It means] that a senior in this country who did not have an increase, incrementally though it be, prevented them from keeping pace. They, as my late neighbour and mentor, PTB director used to tell me, you got to have that incremental savings. You just build up incrementally. But when you take away from people incrementally, you are doing

that much damage, and you do not get caught up when you are taking back.

The one thing . . . and when I talk about the mind-et, this Government has made sure that increases have happened. Increase—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You will have your chance. You will have your turn . . . time to talk. We are talking about . . . we are talking . . . we are talking about pensions.

Pensions have increased and seniors can count on it. I wish . . . I wish I heard Opposition Members as exercised about the increase of cheese that I have had to endure over the last 25 years as they do with the fact that we have found a way, unlike them, to make sure that our folk can somehow see that we are committed to them in this way.

So yes, I am here to say I am very pleased, Madam [Deputy] Speaker, very pleased that we have had this put forward today. And I am very pleased that the commitment of the Government is to ensure that our seniors are cared for as best they can [be] because it is difficult. Many of them are land rich and cash poor. Maybe that \$100, or so, or a couple hundred dollars here and there does not mean much to many. But when you retired in 1995, and you have lived a good life, and you are still around at 90-odd, and your pension does not even cover the insurance bill, that is a reality for many folks. And many folks will look at the Government for the answer.

But I would look for the Opposition to be understanding that this Government in this case is on a good wicket and has exercised . . . and most people, if they listen to the Opposition, would not appreciate that this Government has been fiscally prudent.

An Hon. Member: Prudent!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And why? It is because we have engaged in fiscally prudent practices. That has allowed us to pay down on the debt. And you do not do that with a windfall. You do that incrementally doing the right things. The dollars mean that when you were doing the right thing you just got a little bit more boon and benefit, and we appreciate that. And we will do our best to make sure that it is properly distributed in that way. But, albeit for us to be that forward-thinking in the first place, to put ourselves in a position to be able to take advantage of such a boon, wouldn't it?

So, Mr. Speaker . . . Madam [Deputy] Speaker, I just want to say thank you for these measures coming forward and lend my voice of support.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And first of all, I think the Shadow Minister on our side laid out our party's position quite well. I do support this pension increase.

I rise today because . . . I did not really intend to speak today. But the debate has devolved a bit into a matter of ethos. And when you cast a wide brush on my colleagues and I, I have a problem with that. So, I must clarify the ethos of the One Bermuda Alliance.

We have supported every pension increase that the Progressive Labour Party has brought to this House. But we have a duty as the Opposition to remind this Government, that at times seems to forget the ageing population, the rising cost of living, and things that our constituents—all our constituents—are contending with now.

An Hon. Member: That's factually incorrect.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, when we get up . . . It is not factually incorrect, I would say to you, that Honourable Member. Because when we get up and we mention those things, it is twisted into us opposing or being doom and gloom, or simply not accepting that the Government is making any sort of progress. That has never been our position.

Our position is we want sustainability, longevity. We do not want governance just for today. We want governance for today and for future generations. And that is the ethos of the One Bermuda Alliance. Not just for today, but for future generations. It is easy to govern for now. And we have seen this on many different occasions. Because when we got into our contentious thing (and well understood), the contentiousness over the airport, certain Members in this Chamber have had the most use of that airport, I would say, since then, more so than on my side.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And for the cost of living, when it came to the ageing population, legislation was brought forward. It was contentious. Maybe it could have been amended. But again, not much was done since then, 10 years ago, and we find ourselves in an ageing demographic crisis in which there will not be potentially enough ratepayers to sustain the benefits, to sustain what we are doing today. As the Shadow Minister pointed out, 18 years . . . [in] 18 years my son would not even be finished with college yet. That is not sustainable. That is not governing for the future. That is our problem.

And before any Member opposite gets to their feet and continues to try to frame this argument that the One Bermuda Alliance simply does not want to support a pension increase, they will be categorically incorrect.

They cannot point to one time in the Hansard that we have voted against a pension increase. But we continue and will continue (apparently, much to the vexation of Government) to argue for sustainability for our future generations and to make sure that sound principles of governance and fiscal responsibility are employed in our pension. And yes, increase, of course, because as the Honourable Member just said, you know, the price of cheese is going up. Our seniors need help, yes. But there will be more seniors. There will be a time when I am a senior. There will be a time where—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, I am going to try. I am going to try—

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, thank you.

But there is going to be a time when there are going to be future generations of seniors. And the problem is when you look at governance today, a lot of Members who are passing legislation and these increases will not be here to reap the rewards or benefits. And if we continue to govern the way we are going, what is going to be left for my son? What is going to be left for our children . . . if we do not continue to put emphasis on sustainability and longevity?

There are people right now in the civil service who feel despondent that they have to work longer to retire, that they may not get the full benefits if they have to go past 65 now. This is a real thing that I know they have heard because we have all heard it. And we are not talking to a different electorate. We are knocking on doors. We are all hearing it, civil servants who are tired, but have been told that they must work longer because of decisions made for the future.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: They might not like it, but that is the truth of what people are feeling and what they are telling their representatives. I invite them to explain it, but at the end of the day, I am just conveying what my constituents are conveying to me. They can take their time to refute it if they wish.

But I wanted to take to my feet simply to re-frame this debate, that it is two sides that support increases to pension. But—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh, there you go. There you go.

But this is the problem. And I think it is disingenuous to the listening audience that the Government continues to mislead the people on this particular point, because we have agreed and we continue to support

increase in pensions. We want longevity and sustainability, that is all.

And I invite the Members to bring their chirps to the floor when they are ready to speak during their time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there . . . Okay. Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: But before I allow the other Member to speak, I would like to recognise that sitting in our Gallery is the [Honourable] Attorney General, Senator Kim Wilson *[sic]* the Minister of Legal Affairs. Welcome.

An Hon. Member: Wilkerson.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Much like the Member who just took his seat, I was not planning on speaking, but I must admit, his comments inspired me to do so.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

An Hon. Member: Well done.

Hon. Jache Adams: Because one of the key factors in this debate, Madam [Deputy Speaker, and [how] we are positioning ourselves is a difference of political ideology.

So, what the Opposition have said is that when they took Government, they faced hard times, difficult times, and thus had to take out a loan to pay the civil service. That is their argument. What I am saying is that . . . what they are saying is that they faced hard times, and as a result, the seniors had to suffer.

[Laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: What we are telling you, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that we too faced hard times in the middle of a once-in-a-lifetime pandemic.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aha!

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: And our ideology said, under no circumstances will we not fulfil our commitment by increasing the pensions of our seniors.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: That is political ideology. So that argument . . . if you notice, [there is] silence. And that is how I like it. Yes?

[Laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: Now there is an argument, Madam Deputy Speaker, about sustainability, about the fact that the fund is running out. However, I will remind the people and this Honourable House that it was this Government that has now gotten us to a balanced budget.

Now keep in mind, Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a balanced budget before receiving any dollar from corporate income tax [CIT]. That is important, because what they will continue to try to emphasise is the fact that we are benefactors of CIT, failing to realise that we reached a significant milestone of which they were unable to achieve.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: Without a dollar of corporate income tax.

We are then talking about a Government that had the hard conversations, and made the difficult decisions, and has now stood on this floor and said that we have now stabilised our PSSF. So, this is a space where I am now saying the future of social insurance is in good hands. We will, as we have always done, make the necessary decisions to ensure that the fund is sustainable beyond 18 years. That is a fact. The trend is there.

So, where we are, Madam Deputy Speaker, in this debate, to me, comes down to three things. The first is that this is a promise made and a promise that continues to be kept. Eight years. This is the eighth time that we have increased, or are proceeding to increase, pensions for our seniors. That is significant.

It then sends out a message. And a message that if we want to talk about the ethos of the Progressive Labour Party it is that we revere our seniors. We respect their contributions and all that they have done for this country. And so, we will continue to make the decisions, and we will continue to honour our commitment.

And so again . . . and then my third point, and I alluded to it earlier, was the fact that we have a history of fiscal prudence. I will remind the public and I will remind Honourable Members that whilst the OBA were in Government, they received a ratings downgrade.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Talk about it.

Hon. Jache Adams: Under this Progressive Labour Party, we are now proud to say that we have a ratings upgrade. That is a fact. No opinions yet.

And so, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will begin to wrap up because I think my point is made. And I ultimately just wanted to lend support and appreciate the Opposition's support of this Bill as well.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jache Adams: Absolutely.

An Hon. Member: You started and ended with that.

Hon. Jache Adams: But I just wanted to correct the record because I believe that the previous speakers on the opposite side said some misleading comments that were not correct, and I just wanted to stand up and make that known.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank you for your time.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the [Order]?

There being no other Members, I call on the Minister . . . Are there other Members?

Member, are you going to [speak]? Okay, I recognise the Member from constituency 29.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Apologies, Madam [Deputy] Speaker. I saw one of my colleagues standing up in the back.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But obviously, he was having a chat.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to thank the Finance Minister and Premier for giving our seniors \$3,000 more a year. Notwithstanding the fact that Members opposite refer to it as a little bump. Madam Deputy Speaker, \$3,000 may not mean much to some of those on the other side, but we know it means a hell of a lot to our seniors.

When you hear Members opposite saying 1.74 per cent, and I will quote: *It should be more, and it should be more rapid and be more urgent.* And you have heard from many Members on this side, Madam Deputy Speaker. They had five years. Where was the urgency? Where was the rapidness when they were in power?

I will take a point of order, but there is none. And there is a reason for that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, . . . well, they cannot say anything when you are talking facts like these.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, they said when they were in Government they did not have any money to give any increases. But you will know—

Hon. E. David Burt: They found \$100 million.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —they found money for the America's Cup, \$100 million.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They found millions of dollars for a commission of enquiry.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They found money for an airport. They took away the airport.

An Hon. Member: Which you praised!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The airport, Madam Deputy Speaker, had a surplus of between \$10 [million] and \$14 million a year.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let me emphasise that.

An Hon. Member: Do that, do that.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The airport, the old airport, had a surplus of \$10 [million] to \$14 million a year. So, they took that away. They took that surplus away and gave away our airport.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That continues to cost this country millions and millions of dollars. Millions of dollars! The \$14 million a year that we lost, and we will not talk about the MRGs that we paid out.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, yes, \$50 million.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, \$50 million in MRGs. Fifty million!

Hon. E. David Burt: But tell seniors that money does not grow on trees!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But you could tell our seniors that money does not grow on trees.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They said, Madam Deputy Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Grumble, grumble!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They said that they could not pay employees.

An Hon. Member: We got shanghaied.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They could not pay employees. Again, they found hundreds of millions of dollars for their agenda.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Their agenda.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now, that fellow chirping, that Honourable Member chirping over the back, should not speak at all this week after what he said last week about *those* people.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I guess our seniors are proud of *those* people too, ain't they?

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, some of the things, when you hear Members opposite [say]: *We did not have a deficit*. Well, of course they did not have a deficit. I am talking about the OBA, some of your former colleagues. Some of them still present.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They said they did not have a deficit.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, right?

[Laughter and desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they did not have a deficit, but they did not have that at-risk youth programmes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They did not. When we came on board, Madam Deputy Speaker, we had to close two senior's homes, if you recall. And what did we have to do? One of them was in, I believe, Member Renee Ming's constituency. The senior's home down by the golf club. That was one of them. The other one was out at Pembroke. So, we had to close two senior . . . They were in such bad shape that we had to close them.

Our ferries. Those unreliable ferries prior to 1998. That is correct. The unreliable ferries. No air-conditioning. Busses, no air-conditioning. Think about that. But when we came on board, what did we do?

What did they do with Financial Assistance? What did they do? Zero. Very, very little. What do we do for Financial Assistance? We spend over a million dollars a week. That is what we do for our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me remind those Opposite that between 1998 and 2007, the GDP in this country doubled. It increased more than any time in our history under this Progressive Labour Party Government.

Now, the Honourable Member who took his seat (I think it is constituency 30) asked, what is going to be left for his son? We have made it very clear, Madam Deputy Speaker. And as was very well articulated by the Minister of Public Works, we have fixed PSSF, and we have made it very clear that this reform will continue to take place under this Government. I am very confident. I am not sure if I will be here, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am not sure if you will be here either. But in [2042] I am confident, I am confident that this Government will make sure that our seniors during that period will be covered as well.

And what gives me confidence is that I know that the people of this country have shown the confidence in us to run this country. I see no reason why that should not continue for the next couple of decades. In fact, I am fairly certain that if we stay on the track that we are on, I will go to my grave not seeing ever again another OBA Government.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to finish where I started. Three thousand dollars may not seem like much to those on the other side. But we know that \$3,000 (\$230 a month) means a lot to some of our seniors, if not all of them. And I would thank the Finance Minister for sticking to his promise to increase pensions for seniors in this country every, every year.

And what that does, Madam Deputy Speaker, is speak to this Government. We have shown over and over and over that we care for the people of this country from top to bottom, whether it is giving our mothers day care allowance, whether it is giving our seniors FutureCare. We can sit here for an hour and give that list. But what we know is that the people of this country do appreciate us because they have shown that three elections in a row.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the member from constituency 4. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will not be long, but I do feel definitely compelled to speak on behalf of seniors as representation for the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not think we even really need to stand up and debate that this is an excellent [Order]. I constantly get calls every year from seniors asking, *Minister, when are we getting our increase? When are we getting our increase?* Because they understand that this Government has made a promise to them to be consistent with this increase every year. Every year, Madam Deputy Speaker. It does not matter the amount. What matters is that it happens. It is consistent and we have promised. We have made a promise to be consistent with increases for our seniors.

And so, I just want to stand to say that this is a no-brainer, Madam Deputy Speaker. And to our seniors who are listening, it is coming. It is coming September 15, 2026. So, look out for your seniors' increase. It is coming.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to the [Draft Order]?

There being no other Members, I call on the Minister . . . and Premier. Sorry.

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

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the contributions of colleagues, and I recognise that it is a particular, what seems to be (my word), skill of the Opposition to sit on both sides of the fence. You know, one and the other, or we support, but.

But the Honourable Minister who represents constituency number 19, the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Environment, put it better than I could. Because he reminded us, Mr. Speaker, that all governments have hard times, that all governments govern through difficult times. But it is a question of the

decisions that you make during those difficult times. Because it would have been easy for us to say, *no, we are not going to give seniors pension increases*. But we did not.

An Hon. Member: No, we did not.

Hon. E. David Burt: We made sure that we did. And we found the mechanism of which to do so. And so, to hear the Honourable Member, when he gets up and says his comments and his point about saying, *Well, oh, there's, you know, we only want to do it if it is a responsible thing to do*.

It is a responsible thing to do.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Premier's misleading. That's not what—

The Speaker: Point of order, what is that?

POINT OF ORDER [Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Those comments were not made on this side of the House. We said we supported the increase.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We support the increase.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member will know and recognise that not everything is done in a verbatim fashion. He got up and said that we need to make sure that if we are doing these things it is sustainable. That is what he said.

And here is the thing, Mr. Speaker, at the same point in time, he gets up and argues that the fund is not sustainable.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Do you understand what I am saying? At the same point in time, he gets up and says the fund is not sustainable.

So, under one point, the fund is not sustainable. He gets up and tells people, *Don't rely on it. Don't rely on it, because it's not going to be there*. But then he says, and we would not, you know . . . the excuse is that, *We did not want to give increases because we didn't think the fund was sustainable*. That is all the things which he said, looking back on history.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: All the things he said looking back on history—

POINT OF ORDER [Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House. I did not say we think the fund is unsustainable. We have an actuarial report provided by the Government that states, as a matter of actuarial opinion, that the fund is not sustainable. That is not our opinion. That is about as factual as it gets up here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, those facts of which the Honourable Member represents the same exact facts they were in 2013,—

Ah Hon. Member: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: —2014, 2015, 2016, when they did not give a pension increase, Mr. Speaker. The facts are the same. And so, it then explains the reason why.

An Hon. Member: They want to have it both ways—

[Inaudible interjections and general uproar]

Hon. E. David Burt: It explains the reasons why, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Members, Members, I would like to hear the Premier without having to filter through all that noise.

Hon. E. David Burt: It explains the reason why.

It explains the reason why the Honourable Minister for [constituency] 19, the Honourable Minister of Public Works and Environment, Jache Adams, says it speaks to the philosophy. Because yes, you have to make a choice. You have to make a choice of what is important to you.

And what is important to this Government is ensuring that we put forward the monies that we promised our seniors, Mr. Speaker. That is where we are, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: They can chirp as much as they want because it burns them, Mr. Speaker, that over four years in Government they told seniors who were experiencing hard times as well—

An Hon. Member: That's right!

Hon. E. David Burt: *No, no, no; no, you do not*. Even in action, *Okay, let's go ahead and give them a little token increase so we can keep them silent*.

Mr. Speaker, that is a difference. And so today, I am happy that the Opposition is finally trying to come

around. But I want the people to hear very carefully what the Shadow Minister of Finance said.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member is misleading the House—

The Speaker: What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —intentionally misleading the House. He says, “finally coming around.” In this Chamber, we have supported tons of Bills, specifically. [For] the Premier to get up and say and to infer that, oh, finally, we are coming around, we are certainly not coming around to green, but we certainly are agreeing that there are some good Bills, you know, and some good things.

The Speaker: The point that you are making is that you want the listening audience to hear that the Opposition has agreed with the Government on many occasions. Particularly on—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I want the public to hear that he is misleading the House to infer that we do not agree on things in this House. That is what I am saying.

The Speaker: The Opposition wants you to know . . . they agree with you often Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I did not say that. I have said at many points in time that most of the things that come to the House, 90 per cent of the things are approved.

But I want people to know and understand and listen and hear what the Shadow Minister of Finance said. Because it is important, again, Mr. Speaker. It is important that people know and understand because that party has a history of saying many things before an election—

An Hon. Member: That’s right!

Hon. E. David Burt: —and then changing their minds afterwards. And so, you must be very careful to listen to the words.

What did he say, Mr. Speaker? He said—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Ah, ah, ah, continue to speaker to me.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: You see, Mr. Speaker, it . . . point of order, Mr. Speaker. And I just need to make the

point, if we were making this much noise you would have told us to quiet down, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Speak to me. I . . . I . . . I hear where you are—

Hon. E. David Burt: I am just saying we have to be kept fair on both sides, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Members, Members yes. I am listening to the Premier, and we need to hear what the Premier is saying.

Hon. E. David Burt: So here we are, Mr. Speaker. It is important because the fact that the Pension Fund is not fully funded was the same situation in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, when they did not give increases. Yet we—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Hold a second. Hold a second. See? this is the point. We make different decisions.

You are making my point for me. We make different decisions.

An Hon. Member: That’s right!

Hon. E. David Burt: So, unlike the other side, Mr. Speaker, who said, *Oh, we need to make sure we are responsible. That is the reason why we are not going to give increases.* We have a different view that we will give the increases.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier, again, continues to mislead the House.

My colleague said we need to ensure it is sustainable, and that is why we would *reform*. We would make the increases, but take action, which is why my original comment said we support this, but we are disappointed in the Government’s lack of action in 2013, 2016 . . . sorry, excuse me, the 2016 report, the 2019 report. All of these pension reports say the same thing. Eight years, no action.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Basically, because we are a political organisation we have different philosophies. They may want to try to get down the same road, but there are different philosophies and one side is expressing their viewpoint of their philosophy and the other side is expressing their viewpoint of their philosophy. They may never agree on philosophy. What they agree on is get-

ting down the road to the same point, maybe. But not on philosophy.

Hon. E. David Burt: So again, Mr. Speaker, because I am going to try to make my point, uninterrupted, and given that I am the last speaker and I have unlimited time I am going to do this. And I hope we are not here until five o'clock—

The Speaker: No, we will not be here until five o'clock. No, no.

Hon. E. David Burt: —because I just sincerely hope the Opposition will listen to the point of which I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker, because I think—

The Speaker: We are all in agreement that we will not be here until five o'clock. That is for sure.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Because I think that it is important, Mr. Speaker, because this is an important point. And I go back to what the Minister of Public Works and Environment said.

The Honourable Member, the Shadow Minister of Finance, cannot have his cake and eat it too. He cannot have his cake and eat it too. You need to actually understand and read through the lines, Mr. Speaker, because it is the same approach that led to the seniors in this country being told that money does not grow on trees. His view of what he is saying is that the fund is not sustainable and that is the reason why not to give pension increases.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: He is misleading the House again. It is not my view. It is the professional actuarial opinion as provided by the Government to this Honourable House. Black and white.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Basically—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Basically, what the Premier is saying is that the report may state what it states. The view of how you handle the information is different because it is two different viewpoints.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they know the point. They just cannot get past the fact that for four years they told the seniors of this country, no.

An Hon. Member: For eight years you didn't do anything.

Hon. E. David Burt: No!

Oh, well, I will tell you what we did do in eight years. We did raise seniors' pensions every year by the rate of inflation. We made sure that—unlike them asking public officers to take furlough days, Mr. Speaker—we went ahead and made sure they got increases. We made sure, Mr. Speaker, that we expanded benefits.

[Cross talk and general uproar]

The Speaker: Members, the Premier is trying to wrap up. The longer he has to fight over the crowd, we could be here till five o'clock, and no one wants to be here till five o'clock. So, I suggest that if we tone it down, we can get the Premier to his endpoint quicker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, they want me to move on, but I have not been able to make my point because I continue to get interrupted.

The Speaker: And we want you to make your point.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am trying, Mr. Speaker. I am trying, trust me. But every single time the Honourable Member who got up and said, the reason why—paraphrasing now (before he [raises] a point of order) that it isn't a quote . . . the reason why, you know, that increases may not have been given is because the fund is not sustainable. That [was] the reality then. It is the reality now. An actuarial report which states the condition of the fund does not dictate how the Government acts.

Their view was because the fund says this, the report says this, we are not going to give an increase. When we saw that, we said, *We understand what the fund says, but we are going to give an increase.*

There is a difference of approach. And that is what the public needs to know, hear, and understand because the man who would be Minister of Finance is adopting the exact same approach that the former Minister of Finance had.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is saying I am adopting the former approach. I have my own approach, Mr. Speaker, which has been laid out and sup-

ported by my colleagues here. He does not speak for me. And I ask him to keep it to the factual things which he can refer to and not mislead the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I—

The Speaker: Premier, he said you cannot read his mind and speak for him.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I know the philosophy of which he approaches, and that is the exact same way. Remember, he started . . . he started his comments, Mr. Speaker, by saying if inside of these reports, et cetera, are not sustainable, that is probably the reason why they did not give an increase. That is fine. That is okay. He can have that position, Mr. Speaker.

But the public needs to know and understand what that position leads to. That position leads to what the public saw under the One Bermuda Alliance Government with no pension increases. That is what that view leads to, Mr. Speaker. That is factual, and that has happened.

No. So, Mr. Speaker, now not having been point-of-ordered, I will try to move on.

An Hon. Member: Oh!

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, now here is what is important as well, Mr. Speaker, because, Mr. Speaker, it burns them so much. It burns them so much that on this particular issue their history is what it is.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And do you realise . . . do you realise how much more noise they are making?

The Speaker: You will be all right.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, do not worry, I am going to go to my notes just to make sure that everyone in this country knows and recognises what, what, what, what this change actually means to them, Mr. Speaker. Because I do not want our senior citizens to know, to recognise, and to understand that this does not actually mean a change. So, let me go ahead again, Mr. Speaker.

So, the basic contributory pension, Mr. Speaker, will go up in our time in office, has gone up, the basic, by two . . . just under \$200 a month, or \$2,350 a year. That is what this Government has done by keeping our faith with seniors and making sure that we increase their pensions.

The overall rate of increase since this time of which we have been doing this, which is compounded over time, is now up to 19 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That

is important, matching the rate of inflation over that time. And then the maximum contributory pension, Mr. Speaker, has gone up by \$271 a month. Mr. Speaker, \$271 a month is over \$3,000 a year when added up. That is the difference that the consistent record of [what] increases of the contributory pension benefit has meant. And that, Mr. Speaker, is a good thing for our seniors.

I want to repeat it. The last time I said it in my statement, but I am going to do it again because the marked contrast between 2013—no; 2014—no; 2015—no; 2016 . . . *oh, it is election. Let's give them an increase that comes into effect.* That, Mr. Speaker, is their record.

But let us point to our record. In 2017—an increase; in 2018—an increase; in 2019—an increase. In 2021, after the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase for two years. So, it was above the rate of inflation. In 2023—an increase at the rate of inflation, 4.1 per cent. In 2024—a 2.4 per cent [increase]. In 2025—a 2.3 per cent [increase]. And 2026—a 1.74 per cent [increase]. We continue to keep our word.

And the one thing that I have faith and confidence in, Mr. Speaker, is that the Progressive Labour Party will keep faith with its election promise. And its election promise is that we will continue to ensure that contributory pension benefits go up with the rate of inflation. That is in our platform. That is our solemn promise. That is something that this government has continued to deliver, and we will continue to deliver going future.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the said Draft Order be approved and a suitable message be sent to His Excellency, the Governor.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

The matter has been agreed by the House so that the appropriate letter will be sent. Thank you.

[The Draft Order entitles the Contributory Pension (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026 was approved.]

The Speaker: (She wanted to get up in the Chair and take us to Committee.)

And that, Members, brings us to a close of the matter in reference to the Contributory Pension (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026.

[Order] number 2 is carried [forward].

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I do note, but I would like to make a statement, if I could, on this particular matter, that I know that . . . because it is a disappointment. [Order] number 2 is the report, right?

The Speaker: No, no, no.

Hon. E. David Burt: Justice?

The Speaker: [Order] number 2 is Justice.

Hon. E. David Burt: Then I will defer on that one.

The Speaker: [Order] number 2 is carried [forward]?

Hon. E. David Burt: We will carry it, unfortunately.

The Speaker: Okay, [Order] number 3 is the motion that was done by the Honourable Premier in reference to the Commission of Enquiry.

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

The Speaker: And that is being carried over too. And you would like to make an explanation on it being carried over?

MOTION TO TAKE NOTE OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HISTORIC LAND LOSSES IN BERMUDA WHICH WAS TABLED FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ON 10TH DECEMBER 2021

[Carried forward]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make a statement on this, Mr. Speaker, just to make sure that it is put on the record. Because it is, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, particularly unfair to the persons and the families and to this House and all the rest who went ahead and put together this report. Mr. Speaker, I note that Members Opposite have introduced—

The Speaker: Well, let me just say that . . . it is a commitment to make sure it gets done as long as the right parameters are in place. So, I do not want it to feel like we are being blocked unnecessarily here.

And I know that you and I have talked about that quite a bit to make sure that all the, what could be seen as issues (I will use that word) . . . we are going to iron out all those issues so that we can go forward and have the matter discussed at the appropriate time.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful, and I am not in any way, shape, or form . . . but I think that the members of the public deserve an explanation, especially the people who have written to yourself, who have written to myself, et cetera, all the rest.

We went through this, we came to a space of agreement, and I note that there was something additional that was introduced on this. I sincerely hope that we recognise that these are old matters, and I would reach out to the Leader of the Opposition and say, let's move this forward together.

There is no reason why the Opposition needs to continue to object to us putting forward this motion.

The Speaker: Now, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

Hon. E. David Burt: Put it forward so we can have—

The Speaker: Now take a seat, take a seat. That's not what happened.

It is not the objection of the Opposition. It is the introduction of facts that we have to verify to make sure the facts are clear in the way that we move forward. And it is not . . . there has been no (how do I want to put that?) . . . there has been no position that says that this is where another organisation stands versus where the Government stands. It is . . . there are facts on the table. Our job as a Parliament is to make sure the facts give us the latitude to do what we need to do. And we are doing the assessment of it.

You know—

Hon. E. David Burt: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I think you know clearly that it is a matter we would like to see proceed. But we have to make sure that—

Hon. E. David Burt: I am grateful, Mr. Speaker, and I sincerely hope that we can have a written ruling and I would hope and indicate that Members Opposite, if they have an objection to this matter progressing, as they said, or introducing new information, that they can put those matters in writing—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. He is misleading again.

The Speaker: I'll, I'll—

Hon. E. David Burt: —as the Government has put those matters in writing to the Chair.

The Speaker: We will iron out any issues that come so that when we get to the point there will not be . . . you will not have to start a debate with this type of issue. We will clear it out; we will get a path that will get us into the debate without this being part of the debate. Okay?

Thank you. All right.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am assuming item number 4 has been carried over.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Item—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker? Not to be pedantic and carry on this, but if we, as the Opposition, don't give a statement as well on this issue, it is one-sided.

An Hon. Member: There should be two points out of this.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, it is one-sided, and it has been unfair, quite frankly, today.

The Speaker: Mr. Whip? I will give you an opportunity to clarify anything you need to be clarified on this, but—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes.

The Speaker: —let's not set—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, I will not—

The Speaker: What I should have cautioned was that—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay.

The Speaker: —let's not set this as a precedent that we get up when something is not being done and try and have a discussion on why it is not being done. A decision was made that it is either done or not done, and we stand by that.

But I gave latitude to the Premier, so now I am obligated to give latitude to you guys, to the Opposition.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will simply say this—

The Speaker: I am going to guide you to be—

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will say three sentences and sit down.

The Speaker: —relatively brief, please.

Mr. Scott Pearman: The impression was twice given in this Honourable House by the Honourable Premier that the reason that the motion is not progressing is owing to some sort of objection by the Opposition.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Our Parliament is governed by rules and Standing Orders. You were made aware of the relevant rule and Standing Order. We have a rule of sub judice. You were made aware of it. You were made aware by the court of what cases are proceeding before the court, and you made your ruling. And your ruling was that the motion did not proceed.

The suggestion that we did anything other than draw to the attention of the Speaker's office what was going on in the court and the proper rules, that is all we did, and we did not block. We just follow the rules around here.

Thank you.

The Speaker: I will state that information has been brought to my attention. That information will be assessed. That information will be assessed, and the decision will be made [as to] when we proceed, okay? And

I think that covers everybody in the room on that point. Okay?

Premier, item number 4 . . . item number 4 is being carried [forward] as well. And would you like to close?

Hon. E. David Burt: No problem, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: The point of order is, Mr. Speaker, that the Government is in possession of a written ruling from yourself on this matter, and the information that was introduced predates that ruling. So all I was asking is to ensure that we can get a written ruling on this matter. That is it.

SPEAKER'S RULING

[Precedent on sub judice decisions]

The Speaker: And, Mr. Premier, I would really value that behind-closed-doors conversations do not make it to this floor. I really would appreciate that.

This conversation is going down a road that is bringing closed-door conversations into a space that should never have been discussed in the public. Those were conversations of us trying to work this thing out.

And you know that my office has done a heck of a lot to try and get us down the road. And we have been very accommodating to both sides to make sure that we get a clear path without anything that is going to come back and hinder us later on in life on this matter. Not our life, but, I mean, the function of Parliament when it comes to making decisions on sub judice.

We have got to protect the precedent that is set. And that is why we are taking the course that we are taking to make sure. And the conversations that we have had, both sides, behind closed doors, are supposed to remain behind closed doors, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would—

The Speaker: And you know I have given a commitment to make sure we have moved in a way that provides a latitude for us to go.

The information and the latitude you referred to predated recent information that has been presented. If the recent information presents and needs to be clarified, then the best thing for us to do is to clarify the information before we proceed. We are doing that. And you know that. That is what we have talked about already.

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

Mr. Speaker, I just only asked to make sure that we can get a written ruling on the particular matter. That was it. I think that it is important for the House—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Premier, Premier—

Hon. E. David Burt: I am trying to move to—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait.

Premier, I have asked that we do not continue this conversation, because the more we continue, our private conversations, behind-closed-door conversations, are being exposed where they should not be exposed. Because . . . and that closed . . . and let me clarify for the listening audience.

The closed-door conversations are something that happen regularly in this Chamber between Members of both sides when matters are on the floor. This is not a separate case of how things are handled. It is a regular occurrence that behind-closed-door conversations take place to resolve issues that come before the House.

And the worst thing that we want to do is set a precedent where private, behind-closed-door conversations now become conversations that take place in this room. It is just not the precedent we want to set. Because then it is going to question whether or not we can have open and frank conversations behind closed doors to resolve a matter without the fear of it becoming public knowledge.

Every negotiation has closed door conversations that do not come out in the public. And this is where we are today on this matter. And the commitment is that we are going to find a way forward. But we have to deal with what has been presented. That is all it is. And I would prefer that we end this conversation here and now. Thank you.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: No worries, Mr. Speaker. I await the ruling and thank you.

And I move this Honourable House to now adjourn until Friday, July 17.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any Member wish to speak to that?
Minister Furbert.

BERMUDA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

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

I do want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to just highlight an area that we do not highlight enough, but we all have the opportunity to use their service. And that is the fire and ambulance service, Mr. Speaker. If

anyone in our community has had the opportunity to experience their service, it is an exceptional service.

And I want to applaud the teams within Bermuda's Fire and [Rescue Service] team who endure and witness many health emergencies, and they do it with such profession . . . profession and professional service. And so, I do want to take the time to applaud Bermuda's Fire and [Rescue] Service. And any time anyone ever experiences their service, that they should let them know how they are doing.

SENIOR ABUSE

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I do want to speak to an issue. And that is an issue that has been recently in the news in regard to senior abuse.

Mr. Speaker, every year in budget debates, I take the opportunity to share what senior abuse is looking like for us here in Bermuda. As the Minister who has responsibility for Youth, Social Development and Seniors—but we all have responsibility for youth, social development and seniors—I do not take lightly any senior abuse. And anyone who takes it upon themselves to abuse a senior, and it is notified through the office of Ageing and Disability Services, will be prosecuted to the fullest.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it has been recently reported that the numbers have increased as it relates to senior abuse. And I want to add some context to that, because we do now have an ageing demographic. We know that our numbers as far as persons who are seniors are increasing and they will increase year after year. So, we will see an increase in numbers. And there are many reasons why a senior may experience abuse. First of all, I want to clarify that it is wrong for any senior to be abused.

But the number one category in which seniors are being abused is psychological, meaning people are using words, being coercive, saying the wrong bad things to seniors, which can be very traumatic because you know, words can sometimes hurt more than the actual physical abuse. And usually when physical abuse occurs, psychological abuse occurs before that. But there are many categories, so I just do not want to use the term “senior abuse.” There is psychological, there is physical, there is financial abuse. And actually, the numbers for financial abuse have gone down from last year to this year. So, the awareness that we have been doing in the public domain, as far as ageing and disability services—and I want to acknowledge the Bermuda Police Service, who also have taken a handle in making sure that we educate our community, and particularly our seniors, around financial abuse—is working.

But it is not just a campaign or an awareness that we must do once a year. We all have seniors in our lives. Particularly us as MPs, we have many seniors in our lives. And we must take responsibility in sharing what those red flags are for senior abuse. There can be

very difficult circumstances for seniors, particularly living with family members, because we know, we have research that tells us that family members are actually the ones who are abusing seniors.

But it can be very difficult for seniors when they have to rely on someone to help them. As we get older, we all will have to rely on someone to help us. So how you raise your children is important. How you make them responsible, Mr. Speaker, is important. How you teach them morality and how to have moral behaviours is important, Mr. Speaker. So, there are some values that we have, or we would have learned, or would have been educated to, as it relates to treating and respecting our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, there also has been reporting from the Opposition in regard to the Office of the Public Guardian. And I am glad we both agree on both sides of this House that the Office of the Public Guardian is something that is needed.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But to say that this Government is failing in the area of the Office of the Public Guardian . . . that is what was reported in the paper, that this Government has failed.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Well, I would say the OBA failed because they first introduced the Office of the Public Guardian.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But do not worry, Mr. Speaker, we will get it done.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: We will get it done.

An Hon. Member: Heard that one.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Because we are a Government that has consistently demonstrated that when we say we are going to do something, we will do it.

An Hon. Member: It could take 30 years, though.

[Laughter]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: It could take 30 years for you.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Yes!

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, we are proud to announce that we have drafting instructions within our Chambers and the Attorney General will speak more to it soon. But we are progressing the Office of the Public Guardian for our seniors so that they can have additional protection.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: So, when it does come to this House, I would appreciate the banging on the tables even more.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Another Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We said we would.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Because we will get it done. And you will see, again, because [of] this Government's promise kept—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: We will see who the real failures are, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

You are packing up to go?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: No, I am stepping up—

The Speaker: Oh, you are stepping up to speak.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, yes.

The Speaker: And Junior Minister Lister, you have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I will not take 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker, but—

An Hon. Member: Take your time.

[Laughter]

HSBC ATM BANKING

Mr. Dennis Lister III: In the vein of the speaker before me, Mr. Speaker, I just want to raise an issue.

There is a saying: "He who knows it, feels it best," Mr. Speaker. And I say that because I was shocked and surprised this past week. I live in the West End. And if you live between . . . I am going to narrow it down a bit, but if you live between Barnes Corner and

Somerset Bridge, Mr. Speaker, and you are a client of HSBC, there is only one location where you can go to do some banking at the ATM, at Port Royal [Service] Station or Esso.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Whale Bay Port Royal. But that is the only ATM.

Well, Mr. Speaker, to my surprise, last week (as I said, I live in the area) I went down to the gas station to go to the ATM. And I walked in, and I went to where it was, and the ATM is gone, Mr. Speaker. Shocked and totally surprised, I went to the cashier and asked what had happened. And the cashier said they were told that the machine is going to be taken away and there is no . . . it will not be replaced [with] no further instruction.

So, Mr. Speaker, that left me upset because if you live in between Somerset Bridge and . . . I said, Barnes Corner. But if you really think about it, the next ATM for HSBC is at Warwick Gas Station down by the bowl. So, if you live between Warwick and Somerset Bridge, and you are a HSBC customer, you have nowhere to go to use an ATM.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: So, Mr. Speaker, I am inconvenienced. I now have to go up into Somerset. Yes, there is a branch up there [with] ATMs, or on my way travelling to Warwick I have to stop at Warwick Gas Station.

But, Mr. Speaker, as I said: *He who knows it, feels it best*, because there are many people who live in that area that I mentioned that now have to change how they . . . when they have to go to the bank. If you lived in Granaway Heights, Spring Benny's, George's Bay, Rockaway, Mr. Speaker, you knew that if you had to go get some cash, you ran to the ATM, made a withdrawal, or they had the ATMs where you can do your deposits and transfers. So, you do not have to go to the bank to go in to make a transfer to another account (if it is an HSBC account) because you could do it at the ATM. Mr. Speaker, that has been taken away from [us].

And I will say, Mr. Speaker, if there is a plan that HSBC has to instal a new ATM there, you know, communication is good. Because as I said, when I spoke to the cashier, they told [me] that there was, you know, they are just taking it away. And to the point that the gas station even has a petition there for anyone who comes in who regularly used that ATM, they can sign the petition. Which I did, Mr. Speaker, because, I said, it impacts me. I now have to go further out of my way to go to the ATM if I want to take out from my HSBC account up into Somerset, or as I said, on my way driving to work.

So, Mr. Speaker, and as I said, I understand that the bank might have its reasons, but it should be

communicated because that has inconvenienced its customers.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think at a minimum, when we talk about minimum access to banking, I think having an ATM in an ideal location to service its customers is a minimum level or access of banking. And I think that has been taken away from its customers. So, as I said, Mr. Speaker, as I live in the area and there are many area residents: MP De Silva lives in the area—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —MP Scott Simmons, [and] MP Jamahl Simmons. Their constituents will be impacted by this. So, I want to speak on behalf of those who are impacted.

And just to raise this to HSBC, if it is that they are taking it away for good, I ask [for] better communication. If they are replacing it, again, better communication to the customers in the area that use that ATM because it impacts them. And, you know, we have seniors who live in the area, the Rockaway Senior Centre, and there are probably seniors who go there to get cash out they needed. Now they have to go further out of their way, especially if they have limited transportation, to now get cash. So, it impacts a lot of people, Mr. Speaker.

So again, I do not want to speak too much on that. But again, it is just raising that concern that it has impacted a lot of people. And we would love to hear more from HSBC on what the plans are to do in that location.

INSTILLING RIGHT MORALS, ETHICS AND PRINCIPLES IN OUR YOUTH BEGINS AT HOME

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, switching gears here. The downside of us having sessions in the House every other week is that we did not have Parliament on the Friday after Father's Day. And I know there may have been some that said Happy Father's Day, but Mr. Speaker, I did not get a chance to speak to Happy Father's Day . . . not just to you, but to all fathers.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: But that is not where I am going at, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Happy Father's Day. New father. Yes, yes.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: What I am going at, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Happy Father's Day, Junior.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, thank you.

The Speaker: That is what he wanted; he is a new father.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, I am a new father, I declare my interest.

But where I am going at, Mr. Speaker, is [during the] last session in this House, MP Richardson, he did speak of road behaviour and, you know, the increase of road deaths and things like that, Mr. Speaker. And he spoke a lot of what Government can do and more police in force. And I do not disagree with him, Mr. Speaker. But what I do go a bit further to say is that, Mr. Speaker, it starts at home.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And we have to . . . and I know not all homes are dual-parent homes, there are different home situations. But I implore and I encourage our fathers, our male figures, grandfathers, uncles, older brothers, cousins, the like, to speak to your young males in your family. The statistics show that young males, especially Black males, are those who are most impacted [by] the accidents or fatalities on our roads. And so, the Minister who spoke before me, she said it starts at home. And that is where we have to, notwithstanding the actions by government and the police, but it has to start at home.

And, Mr. Speaker, I am going to use some of my own personal stories.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, before I got my bike at 16, Mr. Speaker, I can remember vividly, many times, driving in the car with you, and someone would overtake us on a bike, and you would [say], you know: *It was crazy, foolish doing all this here. I do not ever want to see you doing that on your bike.*

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: If not?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: If not, I am not going to say what the “if not” was.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: But, you know, you always say it, you never want to see us doing it on a bike. And, Mr. Speaker, I did take that to heart, and I will declare there were times where I did go against that. As a youngster, you know, I did speed, I did have those moments.

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: But, I always remembered, you know, the things that you would say to us in the car, or someone . . . you see someone else doing it, you know, that stuck in my mind. And as I got older, you know, you have to live by those things. As they say, if you train up a child, they will remember it as they get older.

And so, it goes back to, again, Mr. Speaker, males and females, mothers, grandmothers, everyone is impacted by road fatality. Again, I implore and stress for our males to please step up. Take the time to speak to a young person in your family. And it does not have to be a family member, it could be someone in your neighbourhood. You know, you see them doing something wrong, going down the wrong way. Or you have seen them on a bike, you know, we see some crazy stuff—pop a wheelie on a corner, overtaking in between vehicles. If you have seen someone, just take the time. You know, it might seem kind of hard to go out of your way, but that five seconds can change or save someone's life.

So, I encourage and implore the Government. We did see last week, the chairman of the Bermuda Road Safety Council announce that they will soon be launching the new Operation Road Safety Plan for five years. So, the Government is doing what we are doing. And again, the police, you will see the speed cameras coming on. All of those factors, plus with, as I said, males, females, mothers, fathers, everyone, just take the time out to talk to our young people. You know, five minutes of fun can turn into a lifetime of pain and agony. And you have to balance that.

And also, sometimes, Mr. Speaker—which I reflect again, growing up in your household, Mr. Speaker—you made sure to instil in us a healthy fear of you so that we knew that if we did something wrong, first, we had to face or answer to you first, before we had to answer for what we did wrong. And I think, you know, and that still stands with me to today, Mr. Speaker. And so, if we have more fathers and male influences instilling a healthy bit of fear in the younger children, the grandchildren, you know, that will help them when they have to go on in life to make decisions. Because it is always . . . and I said this before in this House, Mr. Speaker. I remember in my elementary and middle school years, the first day of school, every day, you said to the teacher that if I acted up in class, [the teacher] could correct me, but then [the teacher should] let [you] know, and when I got home you dealt with me. So, if we instil that in our children, again, that can make a big positive influence.

We see a lot of antisocial behaviour going on. There are many different reasons. But as I say, if we can get our males to stand up.

An Hon. Member: Bring back the cane.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Bring it.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I can say I have had the cane enough times, so I am not going to disagree. We can bring back the cane because,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —because it puts a healthy fear in our children, Mr. Speaker, and that is what we need. It is a health . . . when it comes to discipline, Mr. Speaker, there is a balance between . . . I do not want to say abuse. But there is a balance when it comes to discipline and correcting your children, with doing it responsibly and then you going overboard. But we have to find that balance, Mr. Speaker. And I can say, Mr. Speaker, growing up, you know, at the time, I did not think it was a balance, but I can look back now and say—

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —you know, that balance got me to where I am today, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That's right.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: So, we need more of that in our society and, you know, we are a village. We need to go back to that village. In the old school days, if you got in trouble in school, even without cell phones by the time you got home your granny already knew what happened. So, you were getting cracked by your granny.

And so, we need to go back to those days. And within reason, you know, we do not want to just be hitting young children for no reasons or, you know, going overboard. But within reason, we have to bring back some discipline, correction. And it might seem hard, you know, love hurts, tough love. You know, they say if you love something, you do have to let it go. But if . . . if you hold on too long, it does not mean you love it because you sort of crush it. It is like a flower. You know, you have to let it bloom, cannot hold it. Well, you know, with our children and young people, we have to give them some tough love. And tough love means being hard. Sometimes it means saying no. Sometimes it means saying no.

An Hon. Member: Sometimes it means stop using your tablet.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Sometimes it means saying no.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Or get rid of your leader.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Sometimes it means saying no, Mr. Speaker, when—

[Desk thumping, laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I will stay out of that one, Mr. Speaker. But sometimes it means saying no when the child might want to hear yes. But we have to be hard. We have to stand in our . . . as parents and as an older people's society, we have to stand our ground.

And, Mr. Speaker, earlier in the debate, we heard a lot about seniors and when you will see pension. But Mr. Senior, I can guarantee—Mr. Speaker—(Mr. Senior.)

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I can guarantee you that if we were to survey most of our seniors in society, they will recall growing up when, they got licks when they got in trouble. But that is what made them who they are today and got them through life.

So, if we want our young people to live to be productive members of society, and to live to be seniors, and to be able to benefit from the increase in pensions when they get to that age, Mr. Speaker, we have to instil in them the right morals, ethics, principles, so that when they go through life, they can be positive in what they do. So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, I am not going to be long. That was just my points I wanted to raise.

But again, as I said, I did not get to say it before, but to all fathers, and every day is a Father's Day because—Father's and Mother's Day—because they have to raise children. It is not a clock in, clock out job. It is a 24/7 job, Mr. Speaker. So, all parents, I want to commend them for the jobs they do, but encourage them, and especially males, to step up and help correct a young person where you can. Because they can . . . it might not only impact them, it impacts the wider community. Because if they can go off to do something positive, they can come back and contribute positively to Bermuda.

So, with that, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Boy. We are going to do ladies first. How is that?

MP Tucker, you have your 20 minutes.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not be 20 minutes.

The Speaker: Okay.

SENIOR ABUSE

Ms. Robin Tucker: But I cannot sit here, especially when comments have been made about an article that I put in the paper, and I have to address it.

And I am going to address it very briefly, but I just want to say that I am very happy to hear, and I will . . . anytime I have spoken in this House or in the other place, if I felt like the Government has done something well, I am the first to get up and celebrate it. Right? I care about what's good for this country. What has not been good for this country, Mr. Speaker, is that a promise being made in a Throne Speech about having an Office of the Public Guardian in 2020, and we are six years later—

[Inaudible interjections]

Ms. Robin Tucker: —we are six years later, having paid people to work on the Office of the Public Guardian, and we now find out that senior abuse has increased, and we have no Office of the Public Guardian, and that is an issue. And so, I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that again, I am glad to know that it is coming. However, I will say, and I want to make it very clear, that I will continue to speak about it until such time that it is in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member who wish to speak?
MP Richardson.

INSTALLING RIGHT MORALS, ETHICS AND PRINCIPLES IN OUR YOUTH BEGINS AT HOME

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

Given the opportunity for bipartisanship on road safety, it behoves me to stand after MP Lister and to contribute. Where we can work together, we should. And so, I want to endorse a lot of the points MP Lister was making, especially those that, our behaviour starts in the home and how much work it takes there.

I was, Mr. Speaker, going to talk to the Road Safety Council's plan, but I will have plenty of opportunity next week. I do not believe that it is what it should be, but again, in the spirit of bipartisanship, I want to reiterate that I agree with MP Lister's points, the vast majority of his points. I think that road safety is an issue that is imminently fixable if we work together as legislators.

And to that end, I just want to say that I will have the opportunity to speak a lot more on this issue next week, and I do not intend to pre-empt that debate.

The Speaker: Yes, we would not want you to pre-empt it.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I am very, very happy right now that it has the attention of enough people that this Honourable House will have an opportunity to

make a difference in the fight against the catastrophes that are happening on our roads and to our families.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Opposition Whip.

LAWLESSNESS ON OUR ROADS

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, just very quickly on this roadside, I do not know who the National Security representative is in the House of Assembly at this present time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Collective responsibility? Yes. Just very quickly, I received an email, several emails actually, on the issue of Middle Road and the lights that lead up to . . . is it Tee Street? Yes, that lead up to Tee Street. And those lights have been there for a while, some work getting done. And the emails were quite concerned. The fact that we had an accident on South Shore and then the road . . . everything was backed up. A 15 minute ride took an hour and 20 minutes just to get into town.

But today, what I witnessed on Middle Road and continue to witness on Middle Road at the Paget lights (and then today was even worse) is the fact that the lights are . . . and I called Public Works, just to get a better understanding if they were aware of the timing of the lights. But there is a period in between the two minutes that you get to drive through, or the one minute, either way, going east or west. In between that, both lights are red. And they sit red for about a minute and that is to allow traffic for the people who live in between that short space to be able to get out, to merge into the main road. What I continue to see is that they cannot merge onto the main road because the main road and the people on the main road, when those two lights go red, continue driving through it. Now, there is a major accident about to happen.

Today, during lunchtime I was at the traffic light. It went red. Oh, okay, cool. I counted the cars, 16 cars continued to go through—just cars—until finally somebody said: *Let me just obey the law*. Sixteen cars. I cannot even tell you how many bikes went through. Both lights were red and they were still going through. So, I am imploring whoever is going to be, or representing, National Security in the House, something has to happen.

Public Works is working on it. They have been communicating with the construction people. I talked to them. So, they have been communicating. The problem is, is that right now on the roads it is lawless, complete just do whatever. And you know what? It is funny because when you are on the road sometimes, you say:

That has got to be Pookie going through there. Why would he do that? Executives. Think about it. You think about it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Think about it. Right?

The Speaker: It's a St. David's thing.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It is the typical profile that you would say, yes, yes, they are going to go through it. Right? Everyone is going through this light. Everyone. And for the life of me, public, please, obey the law. The light is red. And then when something happens, guess what we do? *Ah, you know, I was racing . . .* and we want to be sympathetic. And the Honourable Minister, who has just gotten up, Junior Minister of Finance (I just understand) and was a part of road safety, he is making a compelling appeal. We have completely lost it. On the roads, completely lost it.

And then again, you open up the paper and you saw the other day another overturned car. On a straightaway this time. How does that happen? People are not paying attention. And this appeal is to the public, listen. And to the police. I know you have got challenges. We do not have a highway patrol like we used to. Something has got to happen, especially at points where we are talking about the Middle Road. There is going to be a catastrophe. And it is not the guys, just the guys, Minister. I am watching the girls lick along, also. So mentally, we are losing it. And just anything goes now.

And that stretches across the whole spectrum of how we are living today. A lot of the problems that we have today are because we did not use that rod. Or the fear of the rod. And now everybody comes to the, you know . . . and I will say this here. You know, many of us came up in single parent homes with just a mother. If the father was not there, the mother held the line. And I dare say now, mothers are not even holding the line because these kids are just doing whatever. Do not look at them wrong, Housing Minister. Do not look at these kids wrong.

So, something has got to happen. The police need to get to some of these hotspots. And I am imploring the Government just to speak to the new National Security Minister. I do not have his number. Or the representative that is in here because I do not know who that is.

An Hon. Member: All of them.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, yes, it is all of them. So, all of you better do something about getting some police down there to—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sorry, no, I called yesterday. Yesterday. That is how I found out all about, and then today I witnessed what I witnessed. Right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, oh, yes, that is true. Did not get an answer because the one who emailed me said he did not get an answer. No one answered the phone, so I will get him to—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, I am going to get him to call the Honourable Minister of Education. He will direct him in the right place.

The Speaker: Thank you, [Member].

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So—

The Speaker: I was about to ask if anybody else . . . you look like you are going to sit down.

STUDENT BUS PASS QUANDARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes, I was going to sit.

Just one other thing I wanted to say. My grandson . . . yes, listen, I was helping my grandson. He came home, you know. He is trying to get his bus pass. Right? So, he goes to the bus stop.

An Hon. Member: The bus terminal.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, he went to the bus terminal here in town—yes, the central bus terminal in town. They told him, well, because he is in high school away, he cannot get a pass. Huh? This is a taxpaying family. He cannot get a pass. Where's the Minister? Okay, so he cannot get a pass.

An Hon. Member: Collective.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, collective, yes, yes, yes. I am like, *Hey, hey, what you talking about, mate?* Do not let me go down to that bus stop.

An Hon. Member: Point of clarification.

The Speaker: Point of clarification.

You want a point of clarification?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, I need to finish because I want to be quick. I want to be quick.

So, so, it don't . . . I said, *Okay, well, look. What did they tell you? Oh, go up to Education.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That is what they should have said. They did not say it. They told him he cannot get a pass.

You are not listening to me, are you? They told him he cannot get a pass. This is going to turn into a half an hour.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am not shouting. They told him he did not, he did not get a pass.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Talk to me, talk to me and you will be all right. Just talk to me.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: All right? He could not get a pass.

The Speaker: Just talk to me.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I am like, okay, cool. Let us go up to Education. So, we go and we get there and got to go on the second floor. So, we get to the second floor and you got to make a call to get somebody.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, so, so, we make a call. *Hey, Bill, you are not supposed to come here. You got to . . . you got to go down to cross Shopping Centre down there.* That is how they spoke. Just like that.

I am on the phone. *Yeah, Bill, look, you got to go down there with them across from Shopping Centre. You know where One Communication is.*

I said: *You have to go down to One Communication, get a pass?* So, okay, cool. I am, you know, because I am trying to make sure that my grandson does things right. Do not get all upset. I am not getting upset. I am like, okay, fine. We go there.

Three places just to get a pass. Just to get a—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, no, no, no, no, no. We followed instructions on where to go, and everywhere we were told to go, until eventually we got the right place. So, we got to do some better communication, especially to our students. He is excited now. He has got his pass. He can catch a bus.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, it was a teaching lesson because otherwise I would not have known that people just did not know what they were doing. Yes. The bus terminal told him, *Naw, boss, you cannot get a pass.* Now, there you go. So, we need better commu-

nication, and that is all I am getting at is, just we need to help our students out, not make things difficult. One building to the next building to the next building just to get a pass.

The Speaker: All right.
Minister.

STUDENT BUS PASSES ISSUED BY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, and I will start off with exactly what everybody else says. I was not expecting to speak, but since the Opposition did not give me an opportunity to give a point of clarification, I will take this opportunity to do so, so that everyone out there knows what the proper process is. Mr. Speaker, every single student that attends school in Bermuda—

An Hon. Member: Ah! Hello.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —knows that the bus passes are issued by the schools. And if that person does manage to lose the bus pass, or they do not get the bus pass at that particular time, the next process is they attend the Department of Education and they will be issued a pass. They will take a record of it and they will issue the pass to any student, whether they are Bermudian or they are coming from overseas. That is the process. So, I am unsure about what happened at the—

The Speaker: Whether they are in school here, or school overseas.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: We got it, we got it. I got it. We got it.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: It is where they attend school, Mr. Speaker, because if they attend school in Bermuda, those passes are sent to the schools and they are issued. Any other student, then, must show up at the Department of Education—

The Speaker: Okay. Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —and they will be issued a pass. And that includes any student that does not attend a school in Bermuda.

The Department of Education's offices are located, as the speaker said, down by the shopping centre on Victoria Street. They moved there maybe a year ago and so that is where they were. Where he happened to go was the Ministry Headquarters, which is located on 44 Church Street.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The bus pass is for students.

For the public's edification, bus passes for students are not issued by the Department of Public Transportation. They are issued by the Department of Education, and they keep a record of these things so they know who has got them and how many they have given out. So, anyone who is seeking a bus pass for their child who might be returning from school overseas and would not have gotten one from their school, just [got to] the Department of Education Headquarters down there on Victoria Street, across from [the] shopping centre and they certainly would be accommodated for that.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister, for the clarification.

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to add any comments this afternoon? It looks like I am going to stand on my feet before anybody else does.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: How is that one? Thank you.

Members, we thank you for your participation today. It is not five o'clock yet. That is good. It is not five o'clock yet.

We thank you for your participation and, unlike normal, we will be back next Friday instead of the following Friday. So do not get your Fridays mixed up and show up a week late because you will be here by yourself.

An Hon. Member: All by yourself.

The Speaker: All by yourself.

[Inaudible interjection]

LAWLESSNESS ON OUR ROADS

The Speaker: That's right.

So, in saying that, have a decent weekend. Be safe.

And I do want to make a comment in reference to MP Cannonier's comment around the people going through the stoplight. Similar, just one day this week, I am coming down. I stopped. I was the first car. I stopped at the stoplight. When it turned red, two, three cars behind me stopped and all of a sudden, a bunch of cars just came through. There were not two or three, there were about four or five cars behind me. They just kept coming through. We had already stopped. We had stopped to indicate that the light has changed. You are supposed to stop, and these cars from the back just kept coming through. So yes, it is an issue that should be addressed.

With that said, the House now stands adjourned and we will see you next week Friday, at 10:00 am.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Thank you.

[At 4:36 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 17 July 2026.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
17 July 2026
10:03 AM**

Sitting Number 40 of the 2025/2026 Session

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

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.
The Clerk will now lead us in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Somner, Clerk]

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members. The House is now in session.

[Pause]

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 10 July 2026]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes from 10 July [2026] have been circulated. Are there any amendments required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

[Minutes of 10 July 2026 confirmed.]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Speaker: The following Members have indicated their absence today. Government Whip, MP [Neville] Tyrrell; MP Michael Fahy; MP Jamahl Simmons; and MP Wayne Furbert have all indicated their absence today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Speaker: There is one this morning in the name of the Minister of Home Affairs *[sic]*.
Minister.
Thank you.

**ELECTRICITY (INTEGRATED RESOURCE
PLANNING PROCESS SUSPENSION AND
RECONSTITUTION) ORDER 2026**

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker. I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Electricity \(Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution\) Order 2026](#), proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Energy in exercise of power conferred by section 13A and 45B of the Electricity Act 2016.

The Speaker: Thank you. No more Papers.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND
JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Speaker: This morning, Members, we have quite a few. There are 11 Statements this morning, and the first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement this morning?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

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

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will be aware of my recent [official visit to the Autonomous Region of the Azores](#), undertaken from the 12th to the 14th of July at the invitation of His Excellency José Manuel Bolieiro, President of the Regional Government of the Azores. This visit returned the courtesy of President Bolieiro's visit to Bermuda in October 2024, and that of his predecessor, President Vasco Cordeiro, in 2019; occasions on which successive Presidents extended their invitation for such a visit.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to be accompanied by the Honourable Member the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, whose portfolio speaks directly to the themes of this visit.

Mr. Speaker, the ties between Bermuda and the Azores are ties of family. Since the first Portuguese immigrants arrived aboard the *Golden Rule* in 1849, generations of Azoreans have crossed the Atlantic to build lives in Bermuda, and today roughly 20 per cent of Bermudians carry that heritage, the highest proportion of Azorean descendants of any community in the worldwide Azorean diaspora. Their contribution runs through every field of Bermudian life, our agriculture, our construction, our businesses, our churches, and our sport and our culture.

Mr. Speaker, the programme opened with an official audience with President Bolieiro at Sant'Ana Palace in Ponta Delgada, where I signed the Book of Honour on behalf of the people of Bermuda. The President's warmth, and the generosity of the welcome extended throughout the visit, reflected the genuine affection in which Bermuda is held in the Azores. Our discussions with the President ranged across the breadth of the relationship and confirmed a shared determination on both sides to convert nearly 180 years of shared history into practical cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, a centrepiece of the visit was the Regional Government's presentation of the Blue Azores Programme. In October 2024, the Azores legislated the largest network of marine protected areas in the North Atlantic, protecting 30 per cent of the Azorean Sea across some 287,000 square kilometres, a world-leading achievement, delivered through a science-based process built on consensus.

Honourable Members will recognise in that description the very approach this Government has taken through the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme. Indeed, the two programmes share a founding partner in the Waitt Institute, and our two archipelagos share the waters of the Sargasso Sea. I therefore proposed, and the Regional Government welcomed, a structured technical exchange between our jurisdictions covering marine protected area implementation, enforcement and monitoring, the sustainable fisheries transition, and long-term conservation financing, so that as two mid-Atlantic [island] neighbours, we can continue to lead together in ocean governance.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to attend a working session on the Azorean community in Bermuda, convened by the Regional Secretary for Parliamentary Affairs and Communities, Dr. Paulo Estêvão and wish to place on record the Government's kind acknowledgement of the tireless advocacy of the Honorary Consul and of Bermuda's Portuguese community associations, whose work sustains this relationship day by day.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Honourable House of several matters arising from that session.

- i. The year 2027 will mark 600 years since the discovery of the Azores. The Regional

Government has made clear that Bermuda, home to the largest Azorean-descended community, per capita, anywhere in the world, will be kept a part of these historic observances.

- ii. On the recognition of Bermuda driving licences, I expressed this Government's undertaking in the 2024 Speech from the Throne to pursue structured reciprocity under the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic, and I re-affirmed that Bermuda is progressing that framework with the United Kingdom so that Bermudian visitors to the Azores, and indeed internationally, may drive with confidence.
- iii. On air connectivity, both sides affirmed the value of the direct link between Bermuda and the Azores. I paid tribute to the community-brokered charter programme which has preserved that vital artery, and this Government will remain engaged with all partners as commercial arrangements for the route continue to develop.
- iv. On language and culture, I was pleased to note the work of the Portuguese Cultural Association towards the development of a GCSE in Portuguese available to Bermuda's students. The teaching of Portuguese to a new generation of Bermudians is among the most meaningful legacies this relationship can leave. My Government applauds this initiative and stands ready to lend its encouragement as this work progresses.

Mr. Speaker, I also met with Professor Susana Mira Leal, Rector of the University of the Azores, whom I congratulated on her commencing a second term and on the University's fiftieth anniversary this year.

This meeting produced concrete outcomes. First, we agreed to initiate a workstream connecting the University's oceanographic research institute in the Azores with Bermuda's own experts, given the world-leading marine programmes of our two jurisdictions. Secondly, we agreed to explore synergies between the Bermuda College and the University of the Azores, discovering pathways for Bermudian students building on the College's established model of transfer agreements with overseas institutions. Thirdly, the Rector and I proposed a practical mechanism for the transfer of agricultural expertise to Bermuda, through the University's highly respected School of Environmental and Agrarian Sciences.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to note that at this very moment, two young Bermudians of Azorean descent, Ms. Sydney Rego and Ms. Catrina Furtado, are studying in the Azores as the first-ever Bermudian participants in the FLAD Summer Programme, an academic and cultural programme of the Luso-American Development Foundation in partnership with the University of the Azores and the Regional Government. Their participation, sponsored by the Portuguese Cultural Association working with the Azorean Diaspora

Council, is living proof of what these educational links can deliver, and I extend to both young women the congratulations of this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, the wider programme highlighted Azorean life and innovation. We visited the Azores Autonomy Museum Centre at the Conceição Palace and the Azorean Emigration Museum in Ribeira Grande, which tells the story of the departures that helped shape communities like ours. We toured the Ribeira Grand geothermal power station, where the Azores generate a substantial share of their electricity from the earth itself, and the NONAGON Science and Technology Park in Lagoa, a hub for technology companies and innovation—and also, Mr. Speaker, where their Google landing site will be for their Nuvem cable.

Mr. Speaker, at the Azores Centre for Manufacturing, I met with Mr. Luís Estrela, Regional Director for Agriculture, Veterinary and Food, and received a presentation on the remarkable capability of Azorean manufacturers in the production of domestic food products, from dairy to preserved goods. Our discussions focused on how Bermuda may benefit from the Azores' expertise in this field, especially in dairy production.

Mr. Speaker, the measure of any such visit lies in what follows. I have asked technical officers from the Government of Bermuda to pursue follow-up discussions with their Azorean counterparts in the areas with clear potential for cooperation including; agriculture and food security, energy, cultural and digital connectivity, and academic and technical collaboration with the University of the Azores.

Mr. Speaker, for 177 years the story of Bermuda and the Azores has been written by families, by those who left, those who arrived, and those who kept faith on both shores. This visit honoured that story and set a course for its next chapter, one in which two mid-Atlantic archipelagos work together on the challenges and opportunities we share—from the health of our oceans to the education of our young people, from food security to the energy transition. This visit is evidence that the Bermuda-Azores relationship now reaches beyond our historic ties towards a shared future.

Mr. Speaker, I extend the sincere thanks of the Government and people of Bermuda to His Excellency President Bolieiro, to the Regional Government of the Azores, and to the people of the Azores for a welcome worthy of the deep and enduring friendship between our islands

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Premier.
The second Statement—

[Microphone not on]

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

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

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, 18 July, will be nine years since this Progressive Labour Party Government was returned to office.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: We were returned as Government with a clear mandate: To [build a fairer and better Bermuda](#). For many Bermudians, this meant a government that would work for fairer taxes, dignity and protection for workers, support for our seniors, and more affordable homes. Today I rise to give this Honourable House, and the people we serve, an account of that promise, and the progress that has been made.

Mr. Speaker, to understand how far we have come, we must first look back at where we started. In 2017, this Government inherited a country worn down by years of austerity. We inherited the highest debt in Bermuda's history, a failed development at Morgan's Point that costs taxpayers more than \$200 million—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And counting!

Hon. E. David Burt: —and a bad airport deal. Public officers had been asked to make significant sacrifices—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is misleading the House.

The Speaker: Ah, ah—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House. The airport deal is award-winning and has been promoted by this Government.

The Speaker: You know what? If you would like to speak on it under Question [Period], you can raise it under Question [Period]. Okay?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will re-begin the paragraph.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, to understand how far we have come, we must first look back at where we started. In 2017, this Government inherited a country worn down by years of austerity. We inherited the

highest debt in Bermuda's history, a failed development in Morgan's Point that cost taxpayers more than \$200 million, and a bad airport deal. Public officers had been asked to make sacrifices, and there were 2,000 fewer jobs in our economy than in 2012. So, this Government [had] to work with an ambitious 100-day programme.

One promise the Government made was to ensure that our tax system is fairer and to ease the burden on working people. The previous OBA Administration had raised payroll taxes on workers to the highest level in our history. True to our word, this Government has consistently worked to ensure that workers keep more of the money they have earned, and through that work, we have brought payroll taxes for workers to the lowest level in history.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In history!

Hon. E. David Burt: Today, a worker earning \$48,000 pays 95 per cent less in payroll tax than they did before we took office,—

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and since 2017, the average Bermudian has saved over \$7,000 in payroll taxes. That is tangible progress that Bermudian workers and their families have felt in their pockets.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the changes that this Government has made for workers do not stop with payroll tax alone. We strengthened our trade unions and expanded protections against workplace bullying and harassment. We amended the Employment Act to extend paid maternity leave and introduced paid paternity leave for the first time in Bermuda's history, so that a Bermudian father no longer has to choose between his pay and being present for the first days of his child's life.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: For our father. Our new father!

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, this Government passed legislation that ensures tips and gratuities earned by workers stay in their pockets, not their employers'. And, Mr. Speaker, it was this Government that introduced the first statutory minimum wage in Bermuda's history to ensure that all workers are treated with fairness and protected from exploitation.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Keep going, Premier. Keep going! Remind them!

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, this Government recognised even before we took office, that as much as we take care of those currently working in our economy, we must also ensure that we take care of those who helped to build it, our seniors.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: While the former Administration had granted only a single pension increase in five years, this Government took a very different approach.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we did.

Hon. E. David Burt: During our nine years in office, this Government has increased seniors' pensions seven times in line with the rate of inflation, and this month we passed our eighth increase, which will take effect in August. Since we returned to office, the maximum contributory pension has risen by \$271 a month, over \$3,000 a year, supporting seniors—and that also includes our public sector retirees who have dutifully served our Island who had their pensions frozen since 2014.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. E. David Burt: We delivered on our promise of a 10 per cent increase for public sector retirees while also making historic changes fixing the Public Service Superannuation Fund, which removed a \$2 billion unfunded liability from our balance sheet.

Mr. Speaker, caring also means [ensuring] that our seniors and other Bermudians who rely on Government-supported health insurance have access to the medical care and support they need. It was the previous Progressive Labour Party Government that first introduced FutureCare—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —to help our seniors meet the rising cost of healthcare in their golden years. On returning to office, this Government strengthened it.

Mr. Speaker, this PLP Government kept its promise to expand prescription drug coverage. Under FutureCare, we increased the annual prescription drug benefit from \$2,000 to \$5,000. Under HIP, we introduced a prescription drug benefit where none previously existed, and have since expanded it significantly. We have also removed the 12-month waiting period for the Personal Home Care benefit entirely, so seniors and other eligible policyholders can receive care in the comfort of their own homes from the day they need it.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have now added a free annual health examination for HIP and FutureCare policyholders, and those persons on GEHI, without a co-pay. That is an important step toward early detection,

prevention, and better management of chronic conditions before they become emergencies.

Mr. Speaker, if [our] seniors are our foundation, our young people are our future, and we promised to invest in them.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we did.

Hon. E. David Burt: Where the previous Government had cut the education and scholarship budgets, we restored and increased them. We continue to advance the transformation of our public education system, opening signature schools that give Bermudian [students] specialised pathways built for the careers of tomorrow, and reopening Bermuda's first trade school in a generation through the Trades and Professions Signature at CedarBridge Academy, where, Mr. Speaker, the first class of those Trades and Professions programmes graduated at the end of last June.

Mr. Speaker, we also reversed the former Government's cuts to higher education funding. Through financial support and our College Promise programme, no Bermudian is denied access to Bermuda College because their family cannot afford it. We doubled scholarship funding from \$1.1 million in 2017 to \$2.2 million in this year's Budget, so more Bermudians can pursue higher education locally and overseas.

But, Mr. Speaker, we must also recognise that not every Bermudian's path is the same. A fairer Bermuda must value technical education, trades, apprenticeships, and hands-on training just as much as university education. That is why this Government has expanded apprenticeships, strengthened workforce development programmes, created more pathways for Bermudians to earn, learn and train, and move into skilled jobs in our economy, supported, Mr. Speaker, by the Youth Employment Strategy, which has delivered a significant and measurable reduction in youth unemployment and is helping more young Bermudians secure meaningful opportunities for work and advancement.

Mr. Speaker, a fairer Bermuda must also be a safer one, and this Government understands that lasting safety is not achieved through enforcement alone, but by addressing the root causes of community violence. That is why, through our National Violence Reduction Strategy, we have invested directly in prevention. This year's [Budget] provided funding for education, counselling and outreach programmes delivered by our Violence Reduction Team, which has worked with dozens of public schools, and reached many more through mentorship and early intervention. This Government has provided \$2.5 million in capital development grants for community clubs to upgrade their infrastructure, and over \$670,000 in grants from the Confiscated Assets Fund to support youth programmes, because we recognise the value and importance of our community clubs to our young people.

Mr. Speaker, a fairer Bermuda also means a justice system that does not saddle our people with a lifetime of consequences for their past mistakes. Soon after taking office, this Government removed criminal sanctions for the possession of small amounts of cannabis, while creating a pathway for Bermudians carrying a criminal record for simple possession to have that record erased entirely.

Mr. Speaker, just as we invest in the education of our young people and support programmes and organisations that benefit them, we must also ensure that they, too, have a chance to own a home in the future. Through the Bermuda Housing Corporation, we have brought dozens of empty and derelict homes back online, when the previous OBA Government had delivered zero affordable houses in five years.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Come on.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, we launched the Mortgage Guarantee Programme, cutting the deposit a first-time Bermudian home buyers must find from 20 per cent to 10 per cent, and lowering their interest rate, which has already assisted over 60 Bermudians to purchase their first home.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: How many?

Hon. E. David Burt: Sixty Bermudians.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Sixty Bermudians!

Hon. E. David Burt: We raised the stamp duty exemption for first-time buyers to \$1 million and we removed the tax on mortgage refinancing, so that a family can switch their mortgage for a better mortgage rate without being penalised.

Mr. Speaker, while the Government cannot control prices, we have acted where we can to ease pressures on families. We removed the duty from dozens of essential food items, [and] launched the Affordable Bermuda Basket, working with wholesalers and retailers to cut the price of everyday goods at the register. We, Mr. Speaker, froze the price of fuel at the pump when global prices surged, while at the same point in time eliminating the tax on gasoline which the former Government doubled. And we also capped—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: —also capped excessive banking fees that had quietly drained family budgets for years.

And, Mr. Speaker, we expanded child [day] care allowance to families earning up to \$130,000 a year. Mr. Speaker, I hear chirping. Let the record reflect that the former Government cut the child day care allowance—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What?

Hon. E. David Burt: —from \$70,000 to \$50,000. But, Mr. Speaker, we expanded the child day care allowance to families earning up to \$130,000 a year so that parents no longer had to choose between going to work or staying home because of childcare costs.

Mr. Speaker, none of this is possible without a strong and well-managed economy. This Government delivered the first fiscal surplus in over two decades,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Say it again!

Hon. E. David Burt: —then, Mr. Speaker, we delivered a second one.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Say it again!

Hon. E. David Burt: We designed and implemented the new Corporate Income Tax regime, meeting the global minimum standard, while our competitors stood still.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: We are using that revenue responsibly to pay down \$605 million in debt—

An Hon. Member: Whew!

Hon. E. David Burt: —strengthening our financial position, while creating buffers for the future.

Mr. Speaker, that discipline is also allowing us to invest in the Island that Bermudians use every day. This Budget delivers the largest planned capital investment since [2008], with a \$182 million capital programme to rebuild and strengthen Bermuda's infrastructure. That means significant additional investment in public education facilities, affordable housing—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes!

Hon. E. David Burt: —roads, public buildings, water infrastructure, new ferries, the electrification of our bus fleet, and a new asphalt plant to support the ongoing work of improving Bermuda's roads.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And guess what, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: More? More?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: We secured a Moody's upgrade of our credit rating to A1—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ah! Hey!

Hon. E. David Burt: —restoring the rating Bermuda lost under the previous Administration!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Cup Match time!

Hon. E. David Burt: We did not inherit this economy in good health. But we worked to return it to growth, record-low unemployment, stronger public finances, and greater confidence in Bermuda's future.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and the closure of our largest hotel left a significant gap. This Government worked to secure the largest tourism investment in Bermuda's history, and we are now on the verge of seeing the Fairmont Southampton reopen its doors.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes!

[Desk thumping]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Premier is misleading—

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the point of order is the Honourable Premier is misleading the House in suggesting that this was the first time that a government has attained government without debt.

In 2012, the OBA attained—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —government with a massive debt.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's not a—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He is not the first to—

The Speaker: Wait, wait—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He's not the first to acquire a government that had debt. And it is because of that Government that we are in debt.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Okay—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You don't get in debt overnight.

The Speaker: You have the option of being able to address it under Question Period.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the Honourable Former Premier. I know this is, you know, sensitive, and I am touching on the record—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —of approximately at the point in time that he was the Premier of the country.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Lost 2,000 jobs!

Hon. E. David Burt: You know, exactly. When he said we are going to create 2,000 jobs and lost 2,000 jobs. And, Mr. Speaker, it is important that the people who are listening hear . . . hear the sentence that I am delivering, Mr. Speaker. So, it is important. I will start at that paragraph again, if I may, Mr. Speaker. Because though the Honourable Member is saying that a government, this is [not] the first time a government has inherited debt, no government inherited a debt as much as we did, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah!

Hon. E. David Burt: Record high debt, which was doubled under their term in office, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Doubled. Doubled!

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is misleading the House.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait.
Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Premier is misleading the House. He knows full well, because we have discussed it several times, as has the Deputy Premier, that the Budget Book shows that we did not double the debt.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: And we are sitting here today with almost \$3 billion of PLP debt.

Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

The Speaker: That . . . that is a point—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: —that has been disputed back and forth on many occasions.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: On many occasions.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: I am sure you can address it in your comments . . . in your questions.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion is a double. They don't like it, but that's what it is, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right!

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order. The Premier is misleading the House.

The numbers that he's given to the House are incorrect.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait one second, Premier.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: MP—

Mr. Scott Pearman: The numbers he just gave to the House are incorrect.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The numbers are in the Budget Book, and it is page C-29.
Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know the Honourable Member knows better than referring to those numbers, but I will go ahead and

give him the numbers when I . . . But I am going to continue with my Statement, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The President: Yes point—

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier is now imputing an improper motive. It is perfectly proper for me to refer to the budget numbers when correcting his misstatement to the House.

The Speaker: What he basically said is that you like to refer to the numbers. He didn't say anything inappropriate. You referred to the numbers, which you did.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, \$1.2 billion to \$2.4 billion. The people of the country know what that means. Now, Mr. Speaker,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: One and one is two.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order.

The Speaker: Uh, uh—

[Inaudible interjection]

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier is again misleading the House. The numbers that he has just given to the House are false.

The Speaker: What he said, he quoted two numbers just now. And he didn't attach them anywhere. He just could have said 10 and 12.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait. Let me finish. Let me finish. Sit down. Sit back down.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: He said 10 and 12. I'm going to use two numbers. And he said the people understand what 10 and 12 means. That's all he basically said. He didn't say . . . he didn't dispute your number. He didn't say what his number meant. He just said here are two numbers. And he moved on.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, if you're directing that he may make up numbers on the floor of the House, then so be it.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I'm not directing that he makes up numbers. I am expecting him to put down, as he's done in the past when this has come up . . . he's trying to present a case for the numbers. And that's what he was trying to present, his case for the numbers. And he keeps getting shut down. But . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Whip says I have got my preaching tie on today. Yes, Mr. Speaker, I have my preaching tie on. Red and blue.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: And I am going to bowl some bumpers all day.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, sir!

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Bowl some bumpers.

So, Mr. Speaker, let me continue. Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's tourism industry was hit hard by the pandemic. And the closure of our largest hotel left a significant gap. This Government worked to secure the largest tourism investment in Bermuda's history. And we are now on the verge of seeing the Fairmount Southampton reopen its doors. Its reopening will further boost Bermuda's economy and strengthen our tourism product for years to come.

Mr. Speaker, we also promised to diversify our economy, and we are delivering. We have made Bermuda a global leader in digital finance, and last month we celebrated the landing of Google's Nuvem and Sol subsea cable systems in Bermuda.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: This is a major vote of confidence from one of the world's leading technology companies that will result in \$100 million of investment in the East End, connecting Bermuda directly to the United States and Europe through a new transatlantic [subsea] infrastructure, and strengthen our Island's position in the global digital economy.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: One hundred million.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, none of this happened by accident or overnight.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, it did not.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is the result of deliberate choices paired with prudent financial management [by] a Government determined to keep its election promises. I do not have the time today to cover every promise kept, but after nine years, the record speaks for itself.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, fairer taxes are not a promise for tomorrow. They are a reality today, with workers paying less and those able to pay more contributing their fair share. Protections for workers have been strengthened, and opportunities for Bermudians to earn, learn, and advance have been expanded.

Pensions have increased with the rate of inflation, and support for our seniors has been expanded. Access to health care has been improved, with greater coverage and a focus on prevention. Record investment is being made in affordable housing. Our infrastructure is being upgraded. Scholarship funding has doubled. Our economy is stronger, with record numbers of Bermudians employed in international business, and our debt is being reduced as we deliver budget surpluses, Mr. Speaker.

We do not say that every challenge has been solved. But after nine years, the record is clear. This Government has guided Bermuda through a once-in-a-century pandemic, restored stability to the public finances, and made deliberate choices to build a Bermuda that is fairer, stronger, and better prepared for the future.

Mr. Speaker, that work continues, and this Progressive Labour Party Government will carry it forward with the same determination and commitment that have carried us this far, as we continue to build a better and fairer Bermuda for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Would you like to present your Statement now?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Sure, Mr. Speaker. Let the good news continue.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of Cup Match thank you, Premier, for that beautiful outlining of the last nine years.

HOUSING PROGRAMME, PHASE 2 UPDATES

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda with an [update on the Government's Housing](#)

[Infrastructure Projects Programme](#) and the next steps being taken under Phase 2 of this important initiative.

As Honourable Members are aware, Phase 1 of the Housing Infrastructure Projects Programme is currently underway, with several housing development projects progressing through various stages of implementation.

Building on the progress being made under Phase 1, the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities, working in partnership with the Bermuda Housing Corporation and the Bermuda Land Management Corporation, is now advancing Phase 2 of the Housing Infrastructure Projects Programme through the identification and assessment of additional sites for future housing development.

Mr. Speaker, the sites currently identified for consideration under Phase 2 include:

- Maria Hill, Sandy's Parish
- Tudor Hill, Southampton Parish
- Ocean View, Warwick
- Ewing Street, City of Hamilton
- Harbour View, St. David's

And of course, there is a . . . Government House 33-acre piece of property on North Shore that we will be looking at as well.

These sites already form part of the existing property portfolios of the Bermuda Housing Corporation [BHC] and the Bermuda Land Management Corporation [BLMC] and are being advanced through the collaborative efforts of both organisations. Collectively, these locations represent the next phase of the Government's efforts to increase housing opportunities across Bermuda through the strategic development of publicly owned properties already within the two 'quangos' housing portfolio. The sites have been identified based on their potential to contribute to the expansion of the Island's housing stock while supporting the broader objective of increasing access to affordable housing.

Mr. Speaker, it is currently anticipated that Maria Hill, Tudor Hill, and Ewing Street could be developed primarily as affordable rental housing opportunities, while Ocean View—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: *Neriah*, yes, yes. *Neriah*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We had a debate about *Neriah* or *Maria*. But you are right. It is *Neriah*. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is currently anticipated that Maria Hill, Tudor Hill, and Ewing Street could be developed primarily as affordable rental housing opportunities, while Ocean View in Warwick and Harbourview are being contemplated for a homeownership development, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while these sites have now been identified, preparation work is still in early stages. Once the sites are confirmed, detailed assessments will be

undertaken to determine the most appropriate development approach for each location, including site layouts, building configurations, infrastructure requirements, housing mix, and ultimately the number of residential units that can be accommodated.

Mr. Speaker, we believe it is important to engage the public and surrounding communities early in this process. Housing developments become part of the fabric of the neighbourhoods in which they are built, and providing information about our intentions at this stage reflects our commitment to transparency and open communication. The proposed sites have not yet been finalized. By sharing this information now, residents can remain informed about the locations currently being advanced under Phase 2 and follow the evolution of these projects as planning progresses.

Community input will continue to play an important role as we move from concept planning toward implementation. To support this engagement, a public meeting is being planned for August, during which these sites, and potentially others under consideration, will be discussed. The meeting will provide an opportunity for residents to share their views and raise any concerns so they can be considered as early as possible in the process. While the date and venue have not yet been finalised, the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities will provide further details to the public as soon as they are confirmed.

Mr. Speaker, the transition from Phase 1 to Phase 2 demonstrates this Government's continued commitment to increasing housing opportunities across Bermuda. Through strategic infrastructure investments, careful planning, and collaboration across Government, we are creating the conditions necessary to deliver affordable rental housing, expand opportunities for home ownership, and strengthen communities throughout the Island.

These projects represent more than the development of land. They represent an investment in Bermuda's people, our communities, and our future. By making targeted investments in housing infrastructure today, we are laying the foundation for stronger, more resilient communities tomorrow.

The Ministry looks forward to providing further updates to this Honourable House as work progresses on these important initiatives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Members, the next Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors.

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

PARENT CYBER SAFETY AND DIGITAL WELLNESS COURSES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an [update on the work being advanced](#) by the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, through The Office of Youth Affairs [TOYA], to support Bermuda's young people and their families in a rapidly changing digital environment.

Technology is now part of everyday life for our children and young people. It supports learning, communication, creativity, research, entertainment, and connection. It requires balance, guidance, and practical support at home. Many parents and guardians are trying to guide children through rapidly changing online spaces. They are managing screen time, social media pressure, gaming, online friendships, artificial intelligence, privacy concerns, and digital habits that can affect sleep, confidence, focus, and family relationships.

Mr. Speaker, as online engagement increases during the summer months and continues throughout the school year, The Office of Youth Affairs is taking practical steps to help parents and guardians foster safer, healthier digital habits. The One Bermuda Alliance previously asked when the course would be held, and this update follows up on that inquiry. I can confirm that The Office of Youth Affairs is advancing the Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness course series for delivery during the summer and fall.

The decision to begin during the summer is intentional. When school is out, many young people have more unscheduled time, increased device use, and greater exposure [to] online content as school routines pause. The fall continuation will provide further support as young people return to school, settle into academic routines, and continue balancing learning, recreation, family life, and online engagement.

Mr. Speaker, feedback from youth engagement activities, including the Big Up Yaself National Mini-Youth Conference 2026, confirmed that screen time, social media, online safety, and digital wellness remain concerns for young people and families.

The Ministry focuses its response on practical action. Parents and guardians need clear information, usable tools, and accessible opportunities to ask questions. Young people need guidance that helps them make the most of technology while understanding safety, responsibility, boundaries, and self-care.

Digital wellness is also part of youth mental health. What young people see, share, absorb, and experience online can affect anxiety, mood, sleep, self-image, attention, and relationships. Supporting healthy digital habits is one way to strengthen the protective network around Bermuda's children and adolescents.

Mr. Speaker, the Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness courses are designed as a capacity-building initiative for parents and guardians. The sessions will help families better understand the online spaces young people use, the potential risks, and practical

steps they can take at home. The course offerings will include sessions on healthy summer social media habits, managing screen time at home, understanding the platforms young people use, recognising online risks, cybersecurity basics for families, digital privacy, artificial intelligence and digital literacy, online safety, digital wellbeing, and family resilience.

Including artificial intelligence and digital literacy is important. Young people are already interacting with AI tools, edited content, automated recommendations, and online information that may not always be accurate, safe, or age appropriate. Parents need support to understand these changes without feeling overwhelmed by technical language.

Mr. Speaker, parents and guardians will also receive support to strengthen conversations at home. This includes how to speak with young people about online friendships, privacy, cyberbullying, harmful content, misinformation, unhealthy comparisons, sleep disruption, digital pressure, and the impact online engagement can have on confidence, focus, and mental health.

These courses are practical, accessible, and useful. The aim is for parents and guardians to leave with simple tools they can apply immediately. This may include setting reasonable boundaries, creating healthy routines, recognising warning signs, encouraging responsible online conduct, and helping young people make balanced choices. Parents do not need to know every app to protect their child. They need awareness, conversations, boundaries, and support.

Mr. Speaker, the evening courses will follow the summer day programs. This schedule recognises that many parents and guardians work during the day and require an accessible opportunity to attend, ask questions, and receive support. Young people will participate in supervised evening recreation activities. These activities will provide a free zone from electronics and will offer positive, healthy, social, and recreational alternatives to screen time. This is an important part of the approach. We cannot ask young people to reduce screen time without also providing meaningful alternatives. Recreation, creativity, physical activity, social connection, and community engagement remain essential parts of youth development.

By pairing parent education with youth recreation, The Office of Youth Affairs is supporting the whole family. Parents and guardians will build knowledge and confidence, while young people will have structured opportunities to spend time away from devices in a safe and engaging environment.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry views this initiative as part of a broader prevention and early-intervention approach. The goal is to support parents before they feel overwhelmed, guide young people before digital online habits become unhealthy, and strengthen families before digital pressures negatively affect wellbeing.

This work is about helping young people use technology safely and responsibly. It is also about

ensuring that parents and guardians do not feel left behind as technology continues to change. New platforms, online trends, digital risks, and emerging tools such as artificial intelligence continue to shape the world in which our young people are growing up. The Office of Youth Affairs helps families keep pace through practical education and community-based support.

Mr. Speaker, The Office of Youth Affairs will continue to complete the course schedule and confirm the delivery dates for the summer and fall sessions. Parents, guardians, community partners, and programme participants will receive the promotion directly. Parents and guardians who wish to learn more, register interest, or receive updates on the Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness courses should contact The Office of Youth Affairs by telephone at 246-9100 or by email at youthpolicy@gov.bm.

Through these courses, the Ministry is taking practical steps to support families, strengthen the protective network around Bermuda's children and adolescents, provide meaningful alternatives to excessive screen time, and promote digital wellness in our homes and communities.

Mr. Speaker, our children deserve to be protected in every space where they learn, play, connect, and grow. That includes the digital spaces they enter every day. Through these courses, the Ministry is supporting parents, strengthening families, and helping Bermuda's young [people] build healthier relationships with technology.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

EMANCIPATION COMMEMORATION 2026

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, as Bermuda prepares to observe the Cup Match holiday, we are reminded that [these two days](#) represent far more than a cherished sporting tradition. They invite us to remember the painful legacy of enslavement, honour the resilience of our ancestors, and reflect on the freedoms that were so hard won.

Mr. Speaker, the first day of the holiday is Emancipation Day, marking the abolition of enslavement in Bermuda and commemorating those who endured enslavement while never losing hope for freedom. The second day is Mary Prince Day, when we honour one of Bermuda's National Heroes, whose

courage of telling her story helped advance the abolitionist cause across the British Empire.

Mr. Speaker, the legacy of Mary Prince extends well beyond the pages of history. As the first woman of African descent to publish an autobiography, her narrative, *The History of Mary Prince*, ensured that the realities of enslavement could not be dismissed or forgotten. Her voice continues to remind us of the importance of truth, courage, and the enduring value of human dignity. As Bermudians, we take pride in knowing that one of our own helped shape a movement that changed lives far beyond our shores.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Culture has once again curated a calendar of events to mark the commemoration of [emancipation]. Featuring both Departmental and community-led events, it offers opportunities for learning, remembrance, and community engagement. The full calendar is available to view at culture.bm.

Mr. Speaker, amongst these events is one of our signature offerings: the premiere of a documentary film *Black Enterprise in Bermuda: Trials, Tribulations, Triumphs*, which celebrates the ingenuity, resilience, and achievements of Black Bermudians in business across generations. This film has been created for the Department of Culture by Marquedelle Rodriguez in collaboration with historian and researcher Meredith Ebbin.

Mr. Speaker, [commemorating] Emancipation is not solely about remembering the hardships of the past. It is also about recognising the extraordinary accomplishments of Black Bermudians, whose perseverance, talent, and leadership have helped build the Bermuda we know today. It is also about carrying forward the values of freedom, equity, and respect so that future generations inherit a more just and inclusive Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate Emancipation Day and Mary Prince Day, let us honour our history with honesty, celebrate the resilience of those who came before us, and carry their legacy forward with pride.

Mr. Speaker, on the sporting side of the upcoming Emancipation celebrations, in just two weeks, on 30 and 31 July, Bermuda will once again come together to celebrate a cherished and time-honoured tradition, the Annual Cup Match Classic. This iconic event unites us as a community, transcending boundaries of age, race, and background as we celebrate our shared love of cricket, camaraderie, and the vibrant culture that makes our Island so unique.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly the time of year when the spirit of rivalry and unity shines the brightest. Workplaces and homes, as we see in here today, Mr. Speaker, are [proudly] adorned in light blue and dark blue or dark blue, red, blue . . . all sorts of colours, Mr. Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Red.

The Speaker: Red and Blue.

Hon. Owen Darrell: I missed the red?

[Crosstalk]

An Hon. Member: Yes, you missed red. Come on now, you can do better.

The Speaker: It's red and blue.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Oh, I am sorry. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. Let me try that again.

The Speaker: Red and blue.

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Light blue and dark blue—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —or red and blue.

The Speaker: Correct.

An Hon. Member: See that?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Got that fixed for you.

[Laughter]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —while supporters dress from head to toe in their team colours.

Even my MP in the wrong colour over there.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: I noticed you aren't wearing any today, everyone else has got on their favourite colours.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: We'll get to County game a little later, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —up at East End. That's what I'll conclude.

Hon. Owen Darrell: It is certainly [the] one time of year when wearing the wrong colours, Mr. Speaker, will almost certainly result in some good-natured teasing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to this year's host, the Somerset Cricket Club—

[Cheering and desk thumping]

Hon. Owen Darrell: —under the leadership of President Mr. Richard Scott, his committee, the organisers, sponsors, and the countless volunteers who are working tirelessly to make this year's Cup Match a success.

Each year, the Government is pleased to provide financial assistance to the host club to support the delivery of this beloved national event, and this year is no exception. While we look forward to the excitement and celebration of Cup Match, the Government also wants to ensure that everyone can enjoy the festivities safely.

To that end, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport have committed \$70,000 in total funding to support Somerset Cricket Club in hosting this year's event, including funding for a professional engineering company to inspect and certify the safety of the scaffolding structures erected for the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge the President of St. George's Cricket Club,—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —Neil Paynter, who has returned to the role after a brief break, along with his executive, volunteers, players and supporters. The dedication and commitment shown by both clubs to ensure that Cup Match remains one of Bermuda's most treasured annual traditions is admirable.

Before I conclude, Mr. Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the much anticipated 28th edition of the Annual Mini Cup Match, hosted this year by the Department of Sport and Recreation. This celebrated event will take place on Friday, 24 July, at the Somerset Cricket Club.

This year's match will see the defending champions, Somerset, take on St. George's, with the first ball scheduled for 10:30 [am]. The young cricketers, aged 8 to 14, have spent the past few weeks preparing as part of the Department's Next Innings. Summer Day Camp. They have been coached by former Cup Match players Rodney "Picnic" Trott and Coolridge "Coolie" Durham, together with the camp's dedicated staff.

Each year, Mini Cup Match provides not only an exciting day of cricket but also a glimpse into the bright future of the sport in Bermuda. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to CG Insurance for once again serving as sponsors [and] for their continued investment in developing our young cricketers.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the public to fully embrace the spirit of Cup Match by attending the final Cup Match trials at both clubs on Saturday, 25 July, and remaining for the eagerly anticipated team selections later that evening. I also encourage the public to support the future stars of our national game by attending the Colts Cup Match on Sunday, 26 July, at 11:00 am at the Somerset Cricket Club.

Like so many Bermudians, I look forward to attending the Cup Match trials, visiting families and

friends as they prepare their campsites over the coming weeks, and enjoying the unique atmosphere that this time of year brings. Mr. Speaker, I know we can all agree that it is truly special.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to participate in the longstanding pre-match tradition of greeting the players and officials before the first ball is bowled. It is a privilege to be part of a ceremony, and it marks the beginning of one of Bermuda's most cherished national traditions.

Cup Match is far more than cricket. It is a celebration of our history, our resilience, and our shared identity as Bermudians. It reminds us of the bonds that unite us through heritage, pride, and community. It is a time when families, friends, neighbours, and even strangers, Mr. Speaker, come together to create lasting memories and strengthen the connections that make Bermuda a special place.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate this year's Cup Match holiday, let us also take time to reflect on the deeper meaning. It is for the struggles and sacrifices of those who came before us. They remind us of the importance of unity, respect, and resilience.

Cup Match is an occasion that truly brings everyone together. Whether it is Somerset, whether it is St. George's, whether you are cricketing, whether you are camping with your family and friends, or simply enjoying the holiday, we are united in celebrating what it means to be Bermudian.

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, I wish both teams every success, congratulate everyone who has worked tirelessly to make this celebration possible, and encourage all Bermudians to celebrate responsibly, supporting our young athletes. Enjoy a safe, memorable, and joyful Cup Match holiday.

Happy Cup Match to all!

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, I believe the next Statement is also in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to continue?

BERMUDA'S RIDESHARING PROGRAMME, PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide this Honourable House with a further [update on Bermuda's ridesharing programme](#), launched on 10 June 2026 to expand transportation options and advance the Government's transportation modernisation agenda.

Mr. Speaker, when this Government introduced regulated ridesharing, we did so with a clear principle in mind: taxis first, ridesharing when needed.

This policy was designed not to displace Bermuda's taxi operators, but to complement their service by addressing transportation gaps during peak periods

of demand. By providing additional capacity when it is most needed, Mr. Speaker, we are helping to ensure that both residents and visitors have reliable access to transportation, particularly during evenings, weekends, public holidays, major events, and other times when residents and visitors may experience difficulty securing transportation.

I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that the early results are positive and indicate that the introduction of regulated ridesharing is achieving its intended purpose.

Mr. Speaker, between 10 June and 15 July 2026, Bermuda's ridesharing programme recorded 1,466 rides, averaging approximately 41 rides per day during its first five weeks of operation.

Early adoption was strong, with 220 rides completed during the programme's first six days. By 15 July, cumulative ridership had risen to 1,466 [rides], demonstrating sustained growth and increasing public uptake. The highest single-day total was recorded on 11 July, when 105 rides were completed.

Mr. Speaker, interest in the programme also continues to grow. To date, approximately 100 applications have been submitted for participation in Bermuda's ridesharing programme. Approximately 30 applicants have been approved, with the remaining applications continuing to move through the required review and processing stages.

While the Ministry is working to process applications efficiently, it is also important, Mr. Speaker, that this is done properly. Each application must be reviewed against the established requirements, including Bermuda Police Service vetting, public service vehicle licensing, vehicle inspection, insurance, and other safety and operational standards. This due diligence is essential to protect passengers, support public confidence, and ensure the programme expands responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, the location data indicates that ridesharing activity across Bermuda, includes hotels, restaurants, beaches, residential neighbourhoods, Hamilton, Dockyard, St. George's, the airport, medical facilities, shopping areas and community locations.

This is significant because ridesharing was never intended to serve just a single purpose. It was introduced to provide an additional transportation option within Bermuda's broader transportation network and to enhance the mobility of both visitors and residents.

For visitors, the data demonstrates that ridesharing is facilitating travel from hotels, guest properties, restaurants, beaches, the airport and other key visitor destinations. At least 268 rides involved identifiable hotels, resorts, guest properties or visitor accommodations. This demonstrates that the programme is already contributing to Bermuda's tourism product and helping to improve the visitor experience.

While the tourism benefits are evident, the data also highlights the value of ridesharing for Bermuda

residents. Usage patterns show activity across Paget, Warwick, Southampton, Devonshire, Smith's, St. George's, Sandys, Somerset, Dockyard and Hamilton, with many rides involving residential roads, neighbourhoods, and everyday destinations. This confirms that residents are also embracing ridesharing as a practical transportation option, using the service for travel to and from homes, medical facilities, shopping areas, restaurants, events and community locations.

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Overall, the figures being shared today, Madam [Deputy] Speaker, present a positive picture of growing adoption and meaningful use of the ridesharing service. These patterns of use demonstrate that ridesharing is already making a measurable impact and fulfilling its intended purpose, expanding transportation choice and providing a flexible and convenient, as well as accessible service that benefits both residents and visitors throughout Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is exactly the kind of impact that the Government intended. Ridesharing is helping visitors move around the Island, while also giving residents another option when they need transport. It is helping to fill gaps, improve access and provide additional capacity when and where it is needed. Importantly, ridesharing is also supporting Bermuda's taxi industry.

Since the launch, ridesharing has completed more than 1,000 passenger movements. These are rides that otherwise [may] have placed additional pressure on the existing taxi network during busy periods, evenings, weekends, events and higher visitor days. By helping to absorb this additional demand, ridesharing is supporting the wider transportation system and helping to reduce the risk of passengers being left without transportation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, prior to the introduction of rideshare, one of the recurring concerns in busy periods was the difficulty in securing transportation, or long waits, or being unable to get a ride when needed. Following the launch of rideshare, the Ministry has not seen the same level of public concern regarding passengers being stranded, experiencing long waits, or [being] unable to get transportation. While this will continue to be monitored, it is an encouraging early indication that the additional ridesharing capacity is helping to ease the pressure on the transportation network.

This also supports the reputation of Bermuda's taxi industry. Taxis remain the first and central transportation option, while ridesharing provides a regulated supplemental service to help absorb the additional demand and reduce the likelihood of negative passenger experiences during high-demand periods.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry remains committed to ensuring that ridesharing operators are operating within a regulated and responsible framework. All ridesharing operators remain subject to

Government oversight, including the public service vehicle licensing requirements, vehicle inspections, insurance requirements and operational standards established by the Transport Control Department and the Public Service Vehicles Licensing Board. The Ministry and the Transport Control Department will continue to monitor ride data, operator participation, stakeholder feedback and passenger experience as the programme continues to develop.

Madam Deputy Speaker, reliable transportation is fundamental to the quality of life of our residents and to the experience of those who visit our Island. Early results indicate that it is gaining traction, with measurable evidence of utilisation. The service is expanding transportation options and providing residents with greater convenience and flexibility in their travel choices.

This Government remains steadfast in its commitment to modernising Bermuda's transportation network, delivering safe, reliable and accessible transportation solutions, practical and improved transportation options.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the next Minister, the Minister of Works.

Minister.

COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION PROGRAMME: BUILDING BETTER COMMUNITIES ONE PROJECT AT A TIME

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in the 2026/27 financial year, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment has been allocated \$3 million to establish a [new Community Beautification Programme](#).

This initiative has one clear purpose: To deliver practical improvements that people can see, use and appreciate in the communities where they live, while giving Members of Parliament a direct mechanism to champion the priorities of their constituents.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Government is often judged by the major projects it delivers. But the public also judges us by the everyday experience of living in Bermuda. They notice the overgrown verge that reduces visibility on a busy road, the broken bench in a neighbourhood park, the peeling railing, the damaged playground equipment or the missing road sign. While each may seem minor on its own, together they shape how people experience the communities they call home. That is precisely why this programme is so important.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry already operates an extensive maintenance programme that touches every part of Bermuda. Every day, our officers maintain roads, bridges, public buildings, parks,

beaches, railway trails, seawalls, drains and countless other public assets. They deliver planned maintenance, respond to emergencies and undertake the capital projects that keep our Island functioning.

It is an ongoing responsibility that requires our teams to continually balance planned maintenance with the unexpected demands that arise each day. The reality is that approximately 500 dedicated public officers are responsible for maintaining virtually every aspect of Government's public infrastructure. They perform this work with professionalism and commitment while balancing routine maintenance, emergency response and major capital projects across the Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, even the best maintenance programmes must remain flexible. A crew scheduled to carry out planned work in the morning may instead be called away to respond to an emergency, such as a water main break. Those urgent situations cannot wait. And when they arise, other planned work must inevitably be rescheduled. Rather than accepting those constraints as inevitable, this Government has chosen to respond with a practical solution: The Community Beautification Programme.

The Community Beautification Programme is not intended to replace the Ministry's existing maintenance programme, nor is it an accusation that our officers are not doing enough. Quite the opposite. It recognises [the] outstanding work already being carried out across Bermuda while creating an additional pathway to deliver the smaller community improvements that residents value most.

For the first time, Members of Parliament will have a dedicated mechanism to identify and prioritise local projects on behalf of their constituents. Rather than these requests entering the wider maintenance programme and competing with emergency works and major infrastructure projects, they will be considered through a separate programme with its own funding and delivery framework. Quite simply, this gives Government another practical way to respond to the needs of our communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the programme has been deliberately designed around projects that are practical, repeatable and capable of being delivered efficiently by the Ministry. These are projects that generally fall within the Ministry's existing authority and do not require lengthy approvals from other regulatory agencies, allowing us to move more quickly from request to completion.

Eligible works will include, but are not limited to

- community clean-ups and the maintenance of public spaces;
- landscaping and vegetation management;
- repairs and repainting of public railings, guardrails and fences;
- repairs to playground equipment;
- installation and repair of public benches, trash cans, picnic tables and bicycle racks;
- improvements to public signage; and

- small public safety enhancements, including the installation and repair of roadside traffic mirrors.

These projects may not always attract headlines, but they will make a meaningful difference to the daily lives of Bermudians. They will improve neighbourhood parks, enhance public safety, strengthen community spaces and help ensure that the places people use every day are clean, safe and well maintained. Sometimes the greatest impact Government can make comes through the consistent delivery of the small improvements that people experience every day.

Madam Deputy Speaker, delivering these projects also requires additional capacity. Accordingly, the Ministry will fund a modest expansion of the Bermuda Housing Corporation's Helping the Unemployed Sustain Themselves with Limited Employment, better known as the H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck Programme—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Jache Adams: —through the addition of one new truck and a dedicated support team.

The H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck Programme has quietly become an excellent example of what Government can achieve through partnership. It provides employment opportunities, develops practical skills and enables Bermudians to contribute directly to improving the communities in which they live. At the same time, it has become an invaluable partner in delivering community-based projects across the Island.

Demand for the H.U.S.T.L.E. Truck's services continues to grow, and this investment recognises both its success and its potential. Working alongside Ministry crews and private contractors, the additional truck and support team will increase our capacity to deliver beautification projects more efficiently and more consistently.

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

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, the Community Beautification Programme is expected to commence in August. Detailed programme guidelines, including funding allocations and project submission procedures, will be circulated to all Members of Parliament next week.

This programme will not solve every maintenance challenge overnight, nor is it intended to. What it will do is provide Members of Parliament with a practical new tool to address the everyday concerns raised by their constituents while improving the appearance, safety and functionality of public spaces across Bermuda.

Strong communities are built not only through major infrastructure projects, but also through consistent attention to the places where people live, work and gather every day.

A cleaner park.

A repaired bench.

A freshly painted railing.

A safer roadside.

A neighbourhood that reflects the pride of the people who call it home.

Those improvements may seem small in isolation, but together they help strengthen communities, build civic pride and reinforce public confidence that Government is responding to the issues that matter most in people's daily lives.

The Community Beautification Programme reflects a simple belief: When Government pays attention to the everyday things, people gain confidence that the bigger things are being looked after as well.

That is the standard this Government has set out for itself, and it is the standard we intend to deliver.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

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

CAMBRIDGE CHECKPOINT REPORT FOR BERMUDA, 2023–2025: TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND ACTION

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I rise today, having recently returned to the Office of Minister of Education, to inform this Honourable House that the Ministry of Education has officially released this report, the Cambridge Checkpoint Report for Bermuda 2023–2025, prepared by Cambridge International Education. The [full report](#) is now available on the Ministry of Education website at www.moed.bm.

Mr. Speaker, this report was the subject of a formal request under the Public Access to Information Act 2010. Consistent with this Government's commitment to transparency, and with my own commitment on returning to this portfolio, I have requested that the report be released today in full to the public, accompanied by a plain-language guide for parents.

Mr. Speaker, the Cambridge Checkpoint assessments are internationally benchmarked diagnostic tools that measure student attainment in English, Mathematics, and Science against clearly defined global standards. Cambridge International Education itself has told us, and I quote, that these assessments are best used "to focus supportive activity and resources on specific areas of improvement rather than for the purposes of accountability, for which the tests and testing schedules are not designed or best suited." That is

an important framing, Mr. Speaker, because the value of this report lies not in judgment, but in direction.

Mr. Speaker, let me first speak to what is going well. Overall student attainment has remained broadly stable over the three-year reporting period, with a consistent proportion of our students achieving in the highest performance bands, categorised as "High" and "Outstanding."

English continues to stand out as a strong area of performance across both Primary and Lower Secondary levels. Over 65 per cent of our Lower Secondary English students, and over 50 per cent of our Primary English students, have performed at strong bands consistently across the three years covered by this report. Students are demonstrating solid literacy foundations, especially in reading, which remains a key pillar of academic success. This reflects the sustained efforts of our teachers, school leaders, and support staff, as well as the important role of families who read with their children at home.

Mr. Speaker, I will also speak plainly about where further work is needed. While overall attainment has been maintained, the report identifies a gradual decline in average scores in some subject areas, alongside a widening gap between high-performing students and those requiring additional support. This widening distribution is most evident in Mathematics and Science, where a growing proportion of students are performing in the lower bands, alongside a reduction of those achieving at mid-level.

In Mathematics, performance remains uneven across strands, indicating the need for more targeted instructional approaches. In Science, outcomes are mixed. Lower Secondary performance remains broadly balanced, while Primary Science, particularly Chemistry, requires more focused attention.

Writing in English, while supported by strong reading foundations, requires strengthening across the system. Importantly, the data confirms that some performance gaps persist year-on-year, regardless of the cohort. This tells us that [these] challenges require a system-wide response, not individual scapegoating. That is precisely how this Ministry will address them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak clearly and directly to our teachers, our principals, and all school-based staff who serve our students every day. This report is not a judgment of you. Cambridge International Education itself has told us these assessments are diagnostic tools, designed to identify where students need support, not to judge individual educators or rank individual schools.

But let me be equally clear. Mr. Speaker, the fact that Cambridge is diagnostic does not mean that accountability is absent. Accountability in our public education system rests where it properly belongs, with the Ministry, with the Department of Education, and ultimately with the Minister who stands before this House today. Progress and improvement are expected.

Measurable outcomes are expected. And this Ministry accepts that expectation without qualification.

To parents listening today: if you have concerns about your child's progress, please speak to your child's teacher or principal. A plain-language, parent-friendly guide is being formatted to accompany this report, helping every family understand these findings and how they can support their child at home. Parents remain our most important partners in this work.

Mr. Speaker, I do not stand here today to point fingers. I stand here to point forward. The responsibility for improving outcomes belongs to all of us, that is the Government, educators, families, and the community, and this Ministry accepts that share of responsibility fully.

A clear programme of targeted action is underway:

1. Strengthening Mathematics instruction through focused instructional strategies and professional development to support teachers in addressing identified learning gaps.
2. Expanding writing across the curriculum, so that students write more, more often, and receive clear feedback in every subject.
3. Enhancing Science teaching and learning, with particular emphasis on Primary Science, especially Chemistry.
4. Enhanced analysis of subject- and strand-level performance data to inform classroom practice, targeted especially at students in the lower performance bands.
5. Strengthening the Multi-Tiered System of Support, so that struggling learners are identified earlier and supported sooner.
6. Data-driven School Improvement Plans in every school, aligned with system-wide literacy and numeracy targets.
7. Leadership stability—continuing to ensure that every primary and middle school in the Bermuda Public School System is led by a substantively appointed principal, ending a prolonged period of acting appointments.
8. Structured, ongoing consultation with the Bermuda Union of Teachers and the BPSU (who represent the School Principals) in every element of the response. Reform delivered on teachers is not reform. Reform delivered with teachers is.
9. Continued use of Checkpoint assessment data as a diagnostic tool to drive ongoing school improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I will report back to this Honourable House on the specific interventions announced today with measurable outcomes within 12 months. That is my commitment to this House, to our teachers, to our parents, and above all to our students.

Mr. Speaker, I close with this. We do not have a broken system. We have a system with real strengths, identified challenges, dedicated educators,

engaged families, and children who deserve every ounce of our commitment. That is not brokenness. That is the honest starting point of the work ahead. Our children can read. Our educators are working hard. Our system has real strengths. But too many children are struggling in Mathematics and Writing, and we will not accept that. That is why we are releasing this report today, and that is why we are acting on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the next Statement is also in the name of the same Minister.

Minister, would you like to continue with your second Statement?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead, Minister.

EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS AND PRINCIPLES

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide this Honourable House with an update on the [Education Authority Bill](#), its purpose, how it will be established, what the passage of the Bill will and will not do, and the pathway to its introduction to this Chamber in September.

Mr. Speaker, the establishment of an Education Authority is among the most significant governance reforms contemplated for our [public] education system in a generation.

Mr. Speaker, before I turn to the Bill, I want to place it in its proper context. The Education Authority has always been a part of this Government's education reform agenda. It is not a new idea, nor a [departure] from the reform programme underway. It is the governance foundation that the broader reform programme has long required, a piece of structural work that, once delivered, allows every other reform effort to be sustained, strengthened, and protected over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan project. Successive governments have identified the need for stronger governance and clearer accountability in our public education system. This Bill builds upon that shared analysis and on the reform work already underway, and it does what earlier efforts could not. It places the governance framework for public education into statute, where it can endure beyond any single administration.

Mr. Speaker, before I turn to the structure of the Bill, I want to be clear about its purpose. This reform exists for one reason: To build a public education system that serves the children of Bermuda better than it does today. Every child in our public schools deserves to learn in a system that is well-governed, professionally led, and focused unwaveringly on their outcomes—

in literacy, in numeracy, in wellbeing, and in life chances that carry them into adulthood. That is what this reform is for. Governance change is the means. Better outcomes for our students is the end.

Mr. Speaker, the Education Authority Bill will establish, in statute, the Bermuda Education Authority, a statutory body corporate to lead the Bermuda Public School System. The Authority is designed to be

- an Authority—a public body held at arm's length from day-to-day politics;
- governed by a merit-based Board—nine appointed members with defined, statutory expertise;
- commencing in legislated stages—beginning with a defined first stage of 18 months; and
- accountable to Parliament—through public board meetings and annual reports laid before Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a rebranding exercise. It is not the movement of names on an organisational chart. It is a carefully designed structural reform, delivered in defined stages, to address long-standing challenges in the governance and accountability of our public education system.

Some will ask what an Education Authority adds to the reform work already underway. The answer is durability. An Education Authority provides continuity across political cycles. It provides a governance structure whose remit is education, and only education. It provides long-term stewardship of the system, insulated from the pressures of short political timescales. It provides a single, accountable point of professional leadership at the top of the public school system. These are structural strengths that will protect the reform work already delivered and give the reform work ahead the foundation it needs to succeed.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said in public commentary about the concept of independence in [relation] to this Authority. Today, I want to speak plainly to this House about what independence means in practice. Educational independence is a function of how a system is governed, not merely who funds it. The Authority will be a [public] statutory body, funded by the Government and answerable to the Minister and to Parliament, not a private entity. That is entirely consistent with independent and professional governance.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill adopts what is known as a quasi-autonomous public body model, commonly known as a quango. A structure will be held at arm's length from Government, which is used across the Commonwealth for public functions that require independence from day-to-day political direction while remaining publicly funded and publicly accountable. The independence of the Authority is protected through several structural features written into the Bill, such as:

- A merit-based Board of nine voting members with defined statutory expertise—that includes educational expertise, expertise in supporting vulnerable students, a Bermuda College

representative, and private and public-sector experience, with the Commissioner of Education as a non-voting, ex officio member. Appointments will be advertised and merit based.

- Clearly defined statutory powers and duties, so that the public, Parliament, and the Authority itself understand precisely where its remit begins and ends.
- The Authority's substantive operational design will be developed by the Board itself, in consultation with stakeholders—not by political actors on the Board's behalf.
- A governance framework designed to endure beyond any single administration. Legislation this significant must serve Bermuda's children regardless of which party forms the Government of the day.

Mr. Speaker, these are not aspirations. These are the design features of the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill provides for the establishment of the Authority in four defined, legislated stages. This is a deliberate design choice, one intended to ensure that reform is delivered thoughtfully, consultatively, and with appropriate legal safeguards at every step.

Stage 1—Establish

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 1 (that is, the first 18 months following commencement, with a single limited 12-month extension available) establishes the Authority as a body corporate, appoints the Board, and begins planning and consultation.

During Stage 1, the Board will

- prepare the proposed School Board framework for all schools to use—designing the model and consulting on it; but [establishment] follows in later stages;
- design the future organisational structure of the Authority;
- consult widely, by engaging unions, aided schools, parents, and the community; and
- recommend the onward pathway for Stages 2, 3, and 4.

Stage 2—Structure

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 2 (which will follow Stage 1 and will require further legislation) develops the operational structure, builds the proposed School Board's framework, and undertakes workforce planning. Stage 2 will require further legislation, which will only be brought to this Honourable House after the Board has completed its Stage 1 consultation.

Stage 3—Transfer

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 3 transfers the function of the Department of Education to the Authority, and School Boards become operational.

Stage 4—Full Control

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Stage 4 marks the abolition of the Department of Education and the Authority's assumption of full operational control for the Bermuda Public School System.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear here. Stage 2 will require further legislation and consultation before we proceed. That will be a legal requirement, not a political promise.

Mr. Speaker, these stages are not procedural for their own sake. Each stage exists to build a system that delivers the desired accountability, better teaching, stronger school leadership, faster decision-making, and improved outcomes for the children in our classrooms.

Mr. Speaker, having set out what the Bill will do, and the four stages through which the Authority will be established, I want to turn now to what the passage of this Bill in September will not do, because clarity on both is equally important. This is important for our teachers, for our principals, for our public officers, for our aided schools, and for the parents and students who rely on the stability of our education system every day.

The passage of the Bill will start Stage 1, which is to establish the Authority in law and provide for the appointment of its independent, merit-based Board. It will not, of itself, produce the operational transfers. That come in later stages. Specifically, Stage 1 does not

- transfer employees out of the Public Service;
- change employees' terms and conditions;
- change collective bargaining arrangements;
- abolish the Board of Education;
- establish School Boards;
- change any employee's employment status; and
- aided schools will remain, as they are today, on their own distinct footing.

Mr. Speaker, any change to employment arrangements and Aided School operations occurs at a later, legislated stage, with consultation and legal protection.

Mr. Speaker, stability in Stage 1 is not merely a reassurance to staff and aided schools. It is a promise to our students that their education will not be disrupted by the very reforms designed to improve it.

Mr. Speaker, consultation on this reform is not a matter of ministerial promise. It is a matter of statute. The Bill includes three principal safeguards.

- No progression without consultation: We will not proceed to Stage 2 legislation without consultation with the affected stakeholders.
- This involves a statutory duty to consult: The Board must consult on the future School Board

model, workforce framework, and organisational design.

- A “table-or-[explain]” obligation: Before the first stage expires, the Government must table the next stage’s legislation or publicly explain the delay.

Mr. Speaker, the Attorney-General’s Chambers has advised on the legal pathway, and the staged approach is designed to be legally sound at every step.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak directly about our aided schools, whose leaders I met with earlier this week. Nothing changes for aided schools during Stage 1. Aided schools’ governance, funding relationship, and distinct character are unaffected during Stage 1.

Mr. Speaker, the aided schools are recognised in the Act as a distinct policy issue, to be addressed on their own right, not simply folded into general reform. The Authority will be under a statutory duty to consult them, and their long experience of independent school-level governance will provide valuable input as the Board designs the future School Board framework for the wider public school system.

Mr. Speaker, since returning to the Education portfolio, my priority has been to engage directly and meaningfully with those most affected by this legislation. I have personally met with and spoken to the Bermuda Union of Teachers; the Bermuda Public Services Union; and all of our aided schools and various individuals who were part of the wider consultation on the development of the Education Authority recommendations. The purpose of those meetings was to reconvene the Education Authority engagement process, to provide a full and honest update, and to outline the road ahead. I am happy to report that those meetings were favourably received.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the history behind this work openly. Substantive engagement took place between 2021 and 2024, and those contributions have informed the current draft Bill. Following a change in ministerial portfolios in [early] 2025, that Working Group was stood down. Following the most recent change in ministerial portfolios two weeks ago, the Working Group’s data and the drafting status of the Education Authority Bill have been reviewed and that work has now reconvened with the same partners.

Mr. Speaker, I have also offered His Majesty’s [Loyal] Opposition the same briefing provided to our unions and aided schools. I have also restarted the Opposition Education WhatsApp group that existed before my move to the Cabinet Office. The offer to be collaborative is open and I welcome the Opposition to take it up. I also remain confident that on a matter of this importance to Bermuda’s children, we can find common ground.

Mr. Speaker, the pathway ahead is straightforward:

- September Session—the Bill is tabled in the House of Assembly.

- Commencement—Stage 1 begins and runs 18 months, with an optional one-month *[sic]* extension.
- Later stages—Stage 2 requires further legislation, after consultation.
- Full transition—a multi-year path to full operational control of the school system.

I invite all Honourable Members, on both sides of the House, to engage constructively with the legislation on its merits. This reform is bigger than any political party. It is about Bermuda’s children.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear with this House and with the public about what this Bill is designed to do, and what it is not. An Education Authority alone does not improve literacy. It does not, on its own, strengthen teaching. It does not, on its own, itself, address student wellbeing. Those improvements come through the daily work of educators, school leaders, families, and communities, through the reform programme already underway, and through the work that will continue for years to come. What an Education Authority does provide is the governance, the accountability, and the continuity needed to sustain the work over the long term. And that is the foundation on which sustained improvement is built.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to speak plainly about the standard [by] which this legislation should be judged. It should be judged on whether it delivers genuine educational governance reform, not merely a change in administrative structures; on whether appointments are genuinely merit-based; on whether accountability is real, measurable, and enshrined in law; on whether consultation is structural and required by the Act; and on whether the framework is durable enough to serve Bermuda’s children across administrations. Those are the right standards. And this Bill is intended to meet them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank our teachers, our principals, our aided school leaders, our public officers, our union partners, and the many parents and community members who continue to contribute to and shape the reform work. Whatever we achieve through this reform will rest on their foundation.

But most of all, Mr. Speaker, I want to speak to Bermuda’s students, the young people whose futures depend on the choices this House makes. Mr. Speaker, Governments change. Ministers will change. But every child entering Bermuda’s public schools deserves a system that continues to improve, regardless of who holds those roles. That is what this legislation is about: Creating that stability and safeguarding it for the generations to come.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is not about who runs the system. It is about how the system serves the child. I look forward to returning to this Honourable House in September to formally table the Education Authority Bill and to the substantive, evidence-based debate that will follow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister, would you like to present your [Statement] now?

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, affordability is not achieved through a single policy or a single programme. It is achieved through sustained action, strong partnerships, and a shared commitment to improving the lives of the people we serve.

I rise today to provide this Honourable House, and the people of Bermuda, with an [update on the Government's Affordable Bermuda Agenda](#), and the progress of the Affordable Bermuda Basket, which concludes its nine-month term on 31 July.

Mr. Speaker, Affordability shapes daily [life] in every Bermuda household. It determines whether families put nutritious meals on the table, whether seniors live [with] dignity on fixed incomes, whether young people establish independent households, and whether local businesses stay competitive while serving our community.

Mr. Speaker, Members will recall that in February [2025], the Ministry [of Home Affairs] was entrusted with an expanded mandate to address cost of living in Bermuda. Affordability was and remains one of the defining challenges facing Bermuda households, and the response that we have taken and heard . . . required it to be grounded in evidence. The Ministry began by listening. We commissioned Island-wide surveys and focus groups, and received responses from all spheres of our community, including small and medium-sized businesses. The public named housing, groceries and health care as their heaviest pressures.

On 25 June [2025], we gathered representatives from across Bermuda in our first-ever Cost of Living Summit. Discussions defined the way forward. In October we published what we heard and what we would do, focused on a deliberate first set of recommendations, careful neither to overcommit or to under-deliver. We also delivered on our pledge to give the public some immediate relief.

Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda was never defined [as] the Government's first and final attempt at addressing costs. Those who were ready to start and join us on the journey did. And we recognise that it was a whole-of-country invitation and that others were likely to join along the way.

Mr. Speaker, we know that reforms must be co-ordinated . . . sorry. They must bring transparency and

they must build competition. And they must be also . . . create a framework that limits market abuse. Legislation must be modernised, and the public interest must always be in the room and at the table.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, I will provide an update on each pillar of the Agenda since its launch, and specifically highlight the success of the Affordable Bermuda Basket.

Imports

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, beginning with imports. We recognise that our geographical location exposes Bermuda to world market swings, so imports drive the cost. Resilience in Bermuda means more than strong buildings. It means that we must also ensure that redundant supply routes that increase competition and strengthen supply exist. Under this pillar we have

- hosted Bermuda's first ever [Virtual] Trade Event with the United States Department of Commerce and the US Department of Agriculture, supported by the US Consulate General;
- connected wholesalers and retailers directly to US producers, aggregators and logistics partners;
- engaged with the Florida Economic Commission on citrus importation;
- began reviewing the import rules for milk and citrus to diversify supply [as requested by] local businesses; and
- advanced regional engagement through the public consultation on deeper CARICOM connectivity. Further analysis of those benefits to come before this House.

Food Security and Affordability

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, the cost of food is the number one concern. We were encouraged to help only those who need it most. But the Ministry, and this Government, chose relief for all of Bermuda. Under this pillar we

- Expanded duty relief across hundreds of essential goods in the budget. The expanded list, gazetted as of 8 May 2026, includes rice, fresh fruit and fresh vegetables which now enter at reduced or zero per cent duty.
- Advanced amendments to require price reporting on essentials.
- Launched the Grow, Eat, \$ave parish garden pilot in partnership with the Ministry of Health. Participants learned and developed the skills to grow fresh produce and the model is built to extend parish by parish in the future.
- Secured nine months of savings through partnership with the private sector at the checkout, responding to Bermuda's ask for immediate relief.

Utilities

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, in the utilities pillar, we

- Completed the first comprehensive review of the National Electricity Sector Policy, which was more than a decade old and ensured that the revised Policy ensures that affordability, consumer protection and long-term sustainability was at the centre of Bermuda's energy future.
- Engaged telecommunications providers to offer fixed prices for residents and seniors, which was then confirmed through regulatory review.
- Shielded the public in May from an increase [in fuel prices] through Ministerial Direction which held prices steady for six months while a longer-term framework for economic stability were being developed.
- Partnered with the Bermuda Housing Corporation to develop the Community Solar Pilot [Programme], designed to give participating households more predictable electricity costs.

Housing

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, in the area of housing, between 2016 and 2023, Consumer Affairs recorded an average of 2,230 complaints each year, peaking to 4,300 in 2020, under legislation that was written in 1974 and 1978. Under this pillar we have:

- advanced consultation on the repeal and replacement of the Landlord and Tenant Act [1974] and the Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Control Act 1978, consolidating them into a single, modern statute; and
- set out clear rules on deposits, repairs and unlawful lockouts; a Landlord and Tenant Tribunal to ensure that disputes no longer depend on the Magistrates' Court alone, but rather it will be in support of an amplified National Housing Registry.

Consumer Protection and Education

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, under the Consumer Protection and Education pillar, we recognise that affordability is strengthened when consumers are informed. The reconstituted Cost of Living Commission, which took place in May 2025, has assumed an expanded role in monitoring consumer prices, engaging with industry stakeholders and developing recommendations to improve price transparency and strengthen Bermuda's consumer protection framework. Under this pillar we have

- advanced amendments to bring critical services within the Commission's oversight;
- met with Bermuda's banks on banking costs that households carry;

- launched the National Consumer Rights campaigns and Pricing Education [Campaign], with initial focus on food security;
- engaged 210 students through the Dollars & Sense programme this year to inform their efficient management; and
- tested low fee digital payments under the Agenda's Digital Payments Pilot, in May [2025] during the Digital Finance Forum, where transaction fees averaged under two [cent] per [payment].

Mr. Speaker, finally, young Bermudians will also sit inside this work. On 14 July 2026, Bermuda's inaugural Junior Cost of Living Commission held its first meeting. I recognise Mr. Einnajae Caines, who is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics at Nottingham Trent University in the United Kingdom. Mr. Caines is completing summer placement in the Ministry Headquarters with responsibility for delivering this flagship initiative.

Mr. Speaker, the Junior Cost of Living Commission gives young Bermudians a direct channel into the affordability conversation, and it ensures that future policy decisions benefit those who will inherit them.

Mr. Speaker, I equally recognise the outstanding young Bermudians who have accepted appointments to serve on the inaugural Junior Cost of Living Commission. They are:

1. Mr. Mathew Moreno, Indiana University
2. Mr. Jayce Fraser, Georgia State University
3. Mr. Tajer Basden, Johnson C. Smith University
4. Miss Kyiah Robinson, University of Essex
5. Miss Nasya Burgess, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University
6. Mr. Christen Lugo-[Elibox], Leeds Beckett University
7. [Mr.] Ywione Darrell, Bermuda Monetary Authority
8. Miss Ajai Peets, Office of Youth Affairs
9. Mr. Zayne Sinclair, Youth Entrepreneur.

Mr. Speaker, the purpose of the Junior Cost of Living Commission and discussions . . . Mr. Speaker, the Junior Cost of Living Commission discussed its purpose at its inaugural meeting and what affordability means from a youth perspective. They intend through their work programme to

- examine the cost and the lived experiences and fears of young Bermudians, including groceries, returning home and also transportation pathways, and the cost of entering work or study;
- test public facing Commission outputs, including the grocery price tracker and consumer explainers, from a youth perspective; and
- produce a findings report with practical recommendations to enhance the work of the Commission.

Affordable Bermuda Basket

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, launched on 1 November 2025, was the Affordable Bermuda Basket. This basket was established as a nine-month cost-of-living relief initiative under the Affordable Bermuda Agenda. Its purpose was to reduce the cost of essential grocery items purchased every week by Bermudian families while the Government advanced the broader reforms across imports, food security, utilities, housing and consumer protection.

The design was a genuine partnership between the Government and the private sector, Mr. Speaker. From the outset, local wholesalers reduced the wholesale cost of selected national brand [products] by 10 per cent, and participating retailers applied a further 10 per cent reduction at the point of sale. Mr. Speaker, this was to ensure that full savings would reach the customers on essential items that we know that they buy each week.

Mr. Speaker, what began as a partnership with The MarketPlace and the Lindo's Group then expanded to the inclusion of The Garden Market and The English Market. Bermuda's food wholesalers, BGA, Butterfield & Vallis, Viking Foods, and Dunkley's Dairy, also supported the reduction of these costs through the programme.

Today, Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Bermuda Basket encompasses 178 essential grocery and household products across four participating retailers. They include the staples that Bermudians purchase every week, including rice, dairy products, baby formula, canned foods, household cleaning products, toiletries and everyday necessities, with brands families recognise. The full product list has been publicly listed throughout the programme on costofliving.gov.bm.

The Ministry has maintained oversight of the savings throughout, with willing retailers reporting monthly data on units sold, total sales value and the discounts applied. As a result, Bermudian households have realised over \$750,000 in cumulative savings over the course of the initiative. That is money which remained in family budgets and reduced financial pressure on households, providing practical and tangible, immediate support that working families required.

Mr. Speaker, as originally announced, the Affordable Bermuda Basket was always intended to be a temporary relief measure, operating from 1 November [2025] through 31 July 2026. It was designed to be a bridge for the period between the consultation to implementation by providing immediate assistance while legislative reforms and policy initiatives progressed. The lessons learned through this initiative will help to shape the next phase of affordability measures and inform future partnerships with industry as we continue implementation of the Affordable Bermuda Agenda.

Mr. Speaker, this House once asked what happens after 31 July. The answer is duty relief on expanded essential goods that took effect in May. The price transparency in public view. The National Electricity Sector Policy where consumer affordability

protections are now included in energy planning. The consolidated Landlord and Tenant Act advances providing permanent reform from work that we began over a year ago.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda was founded on data collection, collaboration, real progress and lasting reforms for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the members of the Cost of Living Commission for their support and I extend my appreciation to our retail partners, The MarketPlace, the Lindo's Group, The Garden Market and The English Market, and our wholesale partners, BGA, Butterfield & Vallis, Viking Foods and Dunkley's Dairy, who made these savings possible.

Finally, I thank the people of Bermuda for their real stories and engagement that informed our priorities.

Mr. Speaker, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda demonstrates what is possible when Government listens, industry collaborates, and communities come together in pursuit of a common goal. The work beyond any single programme must be the fact that it moves Bermuda towards a place where every family can afford to live, work and thrive. That is the unity, equity and tangible progress in practice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

That brings us to . . . those Statements are done. You have a second one.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mm-hmm.

The Speaker: Yes. Would you like to do your second—you sat down that time. You threw me off a little bit.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I just wanted a little relief, but thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right. Members, the Minister has a second Statement.

INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN PAUSE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to also report to the Honourable Members and to the public on the [temporary suspension of the Integrated Resource Plan](#), the IRP.

As Honourable Members will be aware, the Electricity (Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution) Order 2026 was tabled recently in this House. The Order was signed and published in the *Official Gazette* on 6 July [2026]. The current IRP proceeding is now formally suspended for a period of up to 18 months.

The Order is made under sections 13A and 45B of the Electricity [Amendment] Act [2026], and

ensures that . . . consultation has taken place with both the TD&R Licensee, which took place earlier this year.

The basis of this pause, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that the suspension is necessary and also to secure consistency between the Government policy and the proposed plan, and that continuing the process would be contrary to the public interest.

One year ago, the Government made its intentions clear, Mr. Speaker. To finalise the reform of a 10-year-old government policy to ensure that the electricity sector would advance with an Integrated Resource Plan [IRP] aligned with it, which embedded consumer affordability protections expressly within the IRP, and to ensure that electricity planning would reflect the economic reality that Bermudians live with and the Government's policies to reduce energy costs.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Resource Plan determines Bermuda's future electricity generation mix for the next 15 to 20 years. The decisions arising from this process will have implications on every resident and business on our Island. They will determine how electricity is generated, the pace and scale of renewable energy deployment, future investments in energy infrastructure, and the cost of electricity paid by consumers.

Those decisions must be guided by a current policy, and at present it does not. The Government will not permit further investment in a plan that is not aligned to a soon-completed policy.

For years, the IRP has been in various stages of development—since 2019. IRP cycles in comparable jurisdictions are completed between 12 and 24 months. The 2019 plan set a target of 85 per cent renewable energy generation by 2035. And in 2025, fossil fuel generators supplied 91 per cent of our generation on this Island, and solar supplied under 6 per cent. To date, we do not have an innovative licence, and procurement for offshore wind began only last year. Seven years of this process has not moved toward the generation mix forecasted.

Mr. Speaker, the risk that misalignment carries has a price. And that price is paid by consumers and a country. At the current fuel rate . . . electricity generated in 2025 stands in the order of \$80 million a year, recovered from consumers. Every percentage point of renewable generation that the plan fails to deliver exposes us to greater costs. The average [retail] tariff stands at 53 cents per kilowatt hour, among the highest in the region. Every year of planning not led by a policy and full sector input runs contrary and holds prices in place.

Mr. Speaker, the Integrated Resource Plan represents one of the most significant exercises undertaken within Bermuda's electricity sector, with investments of time, technical expertise, and financial resources by the Regulatory Authority, the Department of Energy, Bermuda Electric Light Company [BELCO], technical consultants, and other stakeholders. The costs associated with this work are ultimately borne by the electricity customers. With the Government

signalling a year ago that it would advance the process, we must ensure that the consumer and the public are kept in contemplation.

Mr. Speaker, the current National Electricity Sector Policy was issued in 2015 and is now more than 11 years old. Advances in renewable energy generation, the technology, battery storage, distributed energy resources, electric vehicles, digital technologies, and international best practice have transformed how jurisdictions around the world are winning with a better approach towards electricity planning.

The Ministry has undertaken a comprehensive review of the National Electricity Sector Policy, and built collaboration into the work from the start. Mr. Speaker, Members will recall that the Ministry convened the Energy Policy Steering Committee to bring voices from across the electricity sector into the drafting of this new policy. The Department evaluated each of those inputs on its merit. The Ministry then published a draft policy for public consultation on the Citizens' Forum in April, and in May of this year held several town halls.

Mr. Speaker, we received submissions from independent regulators to students and two demands converged: Affordability and fairness must be incorporated.

The revised policy will establish firmly the Government's vision and objectives for Bermuda's electricity sector and provide the framework necessary to guide future generation and planning and also investment decisions.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will have noted the announcement recently that restructured [electricity] rates will take effect from 1 August [2026], as approved by the Regulatory Authority. Cost-reflective charging is the correct principle, and it has been a policy that the Government has stood behind and shared [on] 27 May 2025, when the Ministerial Direction was expressly contemplated, differential tariff classes for consumers, fully, partially, and minimally reliant on the grid.

Fourteen months separate that direction from this change. However, the cost-of-service analysis underpinning the change indicates that residential customers have carried a disproportionate share of the system's costs for years. And this adjustment arrives in the middle of long-term system planning. Expert advice confirms that this very adjustment should rest in alignment with the policy and an IRP process. Rate changes divorced from systems planning are precisely what the public asked this Government to end. Pricing must follow planning, and planning must follow policy. The suspension is no longer important. It is, therefore, critical.

Mr. Speaker, the . . . additionally at present, the Integrated Resource Plan is authored by the utility. Ten years have tested that design, with the last two proposed plans submitted recommending generations inconsistent with the Government's policy.

The duty to lead with the public interest in mind rests with public institutions. The Government, which

sets national policy, the Regulatory Authority, which regulates the sector within it and the utility and sector providers informs such a plan.

Mr. Speaker, the collaborative architecture that our policy was built on will form part of the Integrated Resource Plan when it resumes. A forum of sector voices, structured public consultations, and [published] reasoning behind an inside resource planning, and good investment and the reconstitution provisions of an Order make room for exactly that.

Mr. Speaker, the future of this sector belongs to Bermudians, many of whom are in classrooms today. This summer the Department of Energy welcomed two bursary recipients as summer students. The Department gave them the consultation draft and asked them for their honest assessment. Their feedback on affordability, on training pathways, and on planning for the whole of Bermuda . . . they want equitable access to renewable energy, with community solar carrying [the] benefits of the transition beyond property owners, technology and digital infrastructure. They also shared that they want clearer communication of policy to young Bermudians through secondary schools, Bermuda College and regular, transparent public reporting on implementation. Every one of those topics is being integrated into the final document because we believe it has merit, alongside the formal submissions that the Ministry previously received. We are acting with the very collaboration that we also wish to see.

Upon the completion of the publication of the revised National Electricity Sector Policy, Mr. Speaker, which is anticipated in the coming weeks, the Government will engage with the Regulatory Authority and stakeholders on the reconstituted process, and the Authority will issue its notice of resumption.

Mr. Speaker, alignment between national policy and long-term resource planning is critical. It protects the country, electricity customers, and the generations who will inherit these decisions. The decisions made through an IRP will shape what every household on this Island pays for power for decades. And the plan must ensure that is measured against one test: That it delivers for all of Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

We will now move on with the next item on the Order Paper.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: We have two such reports this morning.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Minister . . . yes.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: [Good] Morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry . . . MP Scott, would you like to present your report?

REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE SEPTEMBER 2023 CYBER-ATTACK ON THE GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I hereby present the [Report](#) of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the September 2023 Cyber-Attack on the Government of Bermuda, which is respectfully submitted for the information of this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Thank you.
MP DeCouto.

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

The Speaker: You can do yours, yes.

REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE: COMPLIANCE WITH PROCUREMENT RULES, FINANCIAL INSTRUCTIONS, GOVERNANCE AND VALUE FOR MONEY OF COVID-19 TRAVEL AUTHORISATION, PROCUREMENT AND OPERATION

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Under the provisions of Standing Order 34(3) of the House of Assembly, I hereby submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly, a [report](#) of the Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee [PAC] on Compliance with Procurement Rules, Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel Authorisation, Procurement and Operation.

The PAC requests that this report be forwarded to the Ministry of Finance for consideration and response on the recommendations made by the Committee. And if I might add, Mr. Speaker, thank you to the Committee and the Parliamentary staff for their fine support and administration.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Okay, we appreciate it. That brings us to a close of Reports.
We will now move on.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: However, before I actually call on the first question to be done this morning, the Junior Minister has approached me this morning to indicate that the questions he sought to find answers for last week . . . he has the answers today for the respective Members.
And have you provided the answers?

An Hon. Member: I am doing so right now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Those Members who sought to ask questions should be receiving them now.

With that said, we will move on this morning. For the listening audience, we have written questions that were submitted, and we also have questions from this morning's Statements.

We will start with the written questions. And the first written question this morning is to the Minister of Education from the Opposition Leader. The responses were required in writing. Have those responses been received?

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

The Speaker: Thank you.

QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

Hon. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House, for each graduating class of Government senior schools from 2018 through June 2026, the number and percentage of graduates who met the academic entrance requirements to apply directly to an accredited overseas university?*

Hon. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide for this Honourable House the performance indicators currently used by the Ministry of Education to evaluate the post-secondary outcomes of graduates from Government senior schools?*

Hon. Ben Smith: *Will the Honourable Minister please provide for this Honourable House the annual results for each performance indicator identified in question 2 for each year from 2018 through 2026?*

The Speaker: The next question is to the Minister of Works from the Opposition Whip. And the two questions both require an oral response.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your first question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Apologies, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

QUESTION 1: ASPHALT PATCHING MACHINE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House how long has the asphalt patching machine been on the Island?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment's road paving fleet does not include an asphalt patching machine. Accordingly, there is no asphalt patching machine to which the Honourable Member's question refers.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Supplementary. Maybe I need to clarify.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no. This is my second question.

The Speaker: He can have a supplementary. You can offer a supplementary.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We have got a lot of speakers in the House today. Got a lot of speakers in the House today.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He can—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I have a supplementary question.

The Speaker: The Member can ask his supplementary.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Ask your supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Maybe I don't have the exact correct name of the machine.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, my question—

The Speaker: Members, Members, I can't hear. The noise is too loud.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Please let the Member ask his question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: My question is, there was a purposeful . . . we understood there to be a purposeful machine that carries asphalt hot while they are moving on the road, as opposed to asphalt being put in a truck and trucked around the Island and then dipped from the truck into the potholes.

I understand that there was a machine that was brought in that kept the bitumen hot and the asphalt hot as it moved along so that it adhered to the road.

Has that type of machine been brought into the Island?

The Speaker: So, you are asking if the new-described machine that has hot asphalt . . . is that operational?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And what is it called?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, with that clarification I can take that to get that information, but the question before me was referring to an asphalt patching machine and my answer remains.

The Speaker: Thank you. Okay.
Second supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, second.

Certainly . . . certainly the Minister, as the Minister of Public Works, would be aware of this machine by now. So, I find it difficult that he would not be able to answer that question.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It is a supplemental question—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —to the substantive question, and I am sure that he already knows the answer.

An Hon. Member: Quite right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, knowing the answer, can he give that answer?

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, the question that was before me that I came prepared to answer was in reference to an asphalt patching machine. We do not have an asphalt patching machine. The Member has now clarified what he is referring to, and I will endeavour to get him that answer in due course.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary.

The Speaker: You want to ask a supplementary?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary.

The Speaker: supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker, supplementary.

Minister, in your opinion shouldn't the former Minister of Works know which machine he is referring to?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive and Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable Member is imputing improper motive and—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —in addition to that misleading the House.

We never brought in such a machine so there was no reason for us to know.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, it's a bit redundant and, quite frankly, unnecessary.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We didn't have the problems that they are having—

An Hon. Member: Oh really?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —with the roads. That's right. That's right.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Okay, all right. The Minister passes.

Opposition Whip, would you like to put your second question?

QUESTION 2: ASPHALT PATCHING MACHINE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Based on the Minister's answer, it pretty much makes it redundant to ask number two.

It says, Will the Honourable Minister please explain to this Honourable House why we are not using the asphalt patching machine islandwide—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I will certainly change that question if you would like, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: No! You can't change the question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The character of it—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Do your homework.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What are we doing?

The Speaker: It has been . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Well, well . . . let me help you out. It has been clarified that you used the wrong description of the machine that you are trying to question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We don't know the name.

The Speaker: So, the question that responds to this question would be similar to the last question.

But what you can endeavour [to do] is to ask the [Minister] can he provide information on the new machine that relates to that question.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: We will gladly give it to you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, sure. Yes, I spoke to the Minister before. I didn't want this to be controversial.

We are just trying to understand what is going on—

An Hon. Member: With the public.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —with the public. So, if the Minister wants to prolong things, like we typically do in this House,—

The Speaker: Well, well . . . no, not prolonging, not prolonging—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —then I will take the answer the next time around.

The Speaker: No, no, no, no—

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: Come on.

The Speaker: It's not prolonging. The Minister wants to make sure he gets the correct information.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: He already knows.

The Speaker: He wants to get the correct information.

So, you are asking that he provides the information on both questions regarding to the new machinery.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It would be much appreciated if the Minister could do that.

The Speaker: Thank you. And I am sure the Minister will endeavour to get it for you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next question that had a written question is for the Minister of Home Affairs from MP Robinson. And it was an oral question, but I don't see MP Robinson at the moment. So, we will move on because I am not sure if anyone can [ask] the question for him.

The next question is to the Minister for Cabinet Office and was also from [Shadow] Minister Robinson and I don't see [Shadow] Minister Robinson at this moment. So, we will pass on both of those.

That now takes us to questions that were generated from the Statements this morning.

And the first Statement this morning that has a question [was by] the Premier on his visit to the Azores.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: It's A-sores.

The Speaker: Premier . . . Premier, MP DeCouto has a question for you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Speak in English, please.

QUESTION 1: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

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

I mean, I am sure myself and many, many people in Bermuda were so glad to hear of this trip and the Premier building these relationships. And to hear that 20 per cent of [Bermudian] people [are] of Portuguese heritage . . . frankly, that sounds low to me, but it is still a lot.

And the Premier mentioned many cultural, technical and scientific issues in his Statement. He must be aware that there are many Bermudians of Portuguese and other heritage actively creating economic links between these countries. And I wonder if the Premier could comment on what efforts Government is making, or initiatives they have, to support people who are trying to forge these economic links.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am trying to relate that to the actual parameters of the Statement. The question is, Is Government helping to assist economic links between Bermuda and the Azores from the discussions . . . from the topic of your Statement? Did I get it right? Economic links? Economic links.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your attempt to clarify. I am not clear on what the Honourable Member is asking.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: May I clarify, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Okay, you can clarify.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We know the Premier had many discussions. In those discussions, did they discuss creating, strengthening or supporting economic links whether private or between the governments?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: That was addressed in my Statement, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Statement did mention cultural issues, technical issues, educational issues. I did not see any mention of any commercial initiatives. Would the Premier clarify what commercial initiatives or economic initiatives were discussed, since he said that it was in the Statement?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, those matters are spelled out in the Statement in regard to matters related to food production, in relation to matters that are also related to ocean protection and other matters that are advancing on those when we are talking about the

Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Initiative and other things which seek to generate investment inside and to work and collaborate on those particular matters. There are also matters related, as I said, to dairy and matters related to food, and also matters related to air transport.

So, I think all those things are covered insofar as economic.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary or new question?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Second supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier identify the quantum of investment that was discussed in the food production and provide some overview of the sorts of individuals or organisations that wanted to invest in these food production initiatives?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, those matters are addressed in the Statement with the name and the actual companies of who we are doing food production with.

The Speaker: Thank you.

New question? Second question?

QUESTION 2: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

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

The Premier spoke at length about how the story of Portuguese Bermudians is intertwined in Bermuda's history. Can the Premier comment on why that important story was not included in the Government's White *[sic]* Paper, *The Story of Us*, or its associated propaganda materials?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda?

Another Hon. Member: What?

The Speaker: Premier.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I didn't hear the question.

An Hon. Member: He should repeat that.

The Speaker: I was conversing with your Whip.
Could you just repeat it?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier talked at length about how important the story of Portuguese Bermudians is and how it's been intertwined with Bermuda's history. The question was why is that story not included in the Government's Green Paper, *The Story of Us*, and its associated propaganda materials?

An Hon. Member: Wow.

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

An Hon. Member: Propaganda materials.

Another Hon. Member: Propaganda?

Another Hon. Member: Foolishness.

The Speaker: I am trying to correlate that to the actual Statement.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that is out of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Member must withdraw the statement and ask it properly.

The Speaker: I am trying to find the leverage, and I am having difficulty finding the leverage correlating the two.

One was specifically speaking about the trip and the other speaks to a different matter. The highlights of the trip [in] the Statement were in reference to what was accomplished, what was discussed in the trip. Okay?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, point of order, Mr. Speaker. It cannot be right—

The Speaker: No, no—

Hon. E. David Burt: —that this Honourable Member will be able to use words like that when at every single point in time those Members will stand up and say improper motive, Mr. Speaker.

It is improper to accuse the Government on that, Mr. Speaker, and the question must be ruled out of order. I ask for ruling, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am trying to address that the question is inappropriate for the topic that it is on.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: May I quote from the Statement, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I am trying . . . now, now . . . and for clarity, there was a series of conversations that were taking place trying to clear up something, so I missed the full of the conversation.

If there were words in there that were inappropriate . . . if there were words inappropriate, then we need to address the inappropriate words.

What I was trying to do was address just your question. But if you can put or restate your question without using what would seem to be inappropriate words. Restate your question.

An Hon. Member: Propaganda.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, I used the word "propaganda." And let me use . . . may I quote the definition of propaganda? *A form of communication that is primarily used to influence an audience and persuade them to further an agenda. Propaganda may not be objective and often selectively presents facts to encourage a particular perception or uses loaded language to produce an emotional rather than a rational response to information presented.*

I can say "in my view," Mr. Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: If you wish, I will clarify and say, "in my view" the associated propaganda materials that come with the Green Paper.

The Speaker: I was trying to get you to a point where you could get an answer for your question. I am trying to help you to get to the answer, because I think you do want an answer to your question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh yes.

The Speaker: If you want an answer to your question, let's put the question as . . . without the propaganda piece in there.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Of course, Mr. Speaker.

Just to give the context for the question, may I re-quote a sentence from the Statement?

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: "[T]he ties between Bermuda and the Azores are ties of family . . . generations of Azoreans have crossed the Atlantic to build lives in Bermuda, and today roughly 20 per cent of Bermudians carry that heritage . . .".

So, my question is, why is this important part of Bermuda's culture not included in the Government's *The Story of Us*, along with other important stories?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, *The Story of Us* is speaking about our connections to the Caribbean. We are clearly . . . and defined on a collective basis, including this Government, having a public holiday, inviting

multiple Ministers, continuing to press forward things and all the rest.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. E. David Burt: Let it be remembered, Mr. Speaker, that it was the Progressive Labour Party that fixed the issues that were left by the United Bermuda Party, of which they know that they claim their heritage from, where they discriminated against Portuguese-born persons. We fixed that, Mr. Speaker.

We also, Mr. Speaker, fixed the issue of mixed status families. That is the record of this Government. And the Portuguese people in this country know who stands up for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Any further supplementary or new question?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Premier, MP King also has a question for you.

QUESTION 1: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Mr. Robert King: Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, Members of this Honourable House and the listening public.

Honourable Premier, in your Statement you highlighted discussions with the Azorean Regional Director of Agriculture regarding dairy production and indicated that Bermuda may benefit from Azorean expertise. Can you tell this Honourable House what specific commitments, projects or agreements were reached to strengthen Bermuda's dairy industry and improve our food security?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement. Further details will come after the technical officers, as stated in the Statement, conclude those discussions.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Can the Honourable Premier confirm whether the Government intends to review Bermuda's

current dairy policies, including the regulatory framework governing dairy production and milk imports to determine whether they continue to serve Bermuda's long-term food security interests?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, that is not related to my Statement, and so—

The Speaker: You saw me pause, and I was trying to understand the wording to see if it fits inside the Statement.

The Statement itself wasn't addressing the long-term of the food . . . shortage supply, whichever term you used. It was just speaking to what could possibly be discussed with this new partnership. So, it didn't necessarily speak to the overall view of what the shortage is.

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

Given the ongoing concerns surrounding Bermuda's dairy operation, including environmental and public concerns raised by nearby residents, what lessons from the Azorean model of modern dairy farming, environmental protection, and animal husbandry does the Government intend to adopt in Bermuda?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, those will be matters of discussion. That is precisely what was stated inside of the Statement.

We spoke about the matter related to the University of the Azores. I made clear the challenges of which we are facing and the need to make sure that we increase and boost domestic dairy production, while also making sure that we can do it better. We recognise that there have been challenges, and there is expertise there. That is what partnership is about.

So, whether or not it was with the University of the Azores, or whether or not with the conversation with the Regional Director responsible for Agriculture on these particular matters, the Assistant Cabinet Secretary and the Deputy Director have already followed up on these particular matters. As we have noted, they are important. We have put money inside of our budget in place for strategic initiatives in regard to food security, and those things will happen.

So, I understand the Honourable Member may have a particular viewpoint on this. Got it. Accept it. But the reality is this Government is going to continue to press forward on matters related to food security, and we have identified a partner that can certainly help and to assist us.

On the Saturday that I left for the Azores, at my community clinic there were persons there who were from the Netherlands who were here on Island looking to help us with our dairy issues as well. So, we are continuing to move on this. But these are partnerships that can be formed.

So, the Honourable Member can stay tuned for these particular matters, because that is what we are looking at. It is not limited to what specifically, it is limited to all of what we can do because we may not even know what to ask for.

They produce significant amounts of dairy. They export dairy. They export cheese. They export a number of different things. They do other things insofar as the Honourable Member had mentioned in animals. We are not trying to go that far. What we said is we are going to start small. We know [precisely what it is that we want], and we want to make sure that we have a stable dairy supply that is up to the latest standards, that is infused with the latest technology so we can continue to have that in Bermuda. And that is what the partnership is going to entail.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second question?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Mr. Robert King: And I thank the Honourable Premier for his answers.

Would I be correct in saying that the purpose of the consultations or meetings with the Agriculture Ministry and respective persons was more informal to start a preliminary process of discussion towards establishing collaboration and cooperation between our two countries?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: No.

The Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

When should the people of Bermuda expect that some of the discussed topics of importance will be implemented according to a specific plan, as these were not informal discussions?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement.

The Speaker: The answer is contained within the Statement.

Second supplementary . . . or third question?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Will the Premier table any memorandum of understanding, work plan, or technical cooperation agreement arising from his visit so that this House can assess whether the visit delivers tangible benefits rather than remaining an expression of goodwill?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if there are further things to be tabled and shared with this House, they will be shared.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Third question. That was your second supplementary on the second question. Third question?

Mr. Robert King: Third question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 3: OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE AZORES

Mr. Robert King: What was the total cost of the official delegation to Bermuda's taxpayers, and what key performance indicators will the Government use to measure whether this visit provides value for money?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the travel will be declared in the regular fashion as is normally done.
Thank you.

The Speaker: The policy is, just to repeat it for the listening audience, that all government travel is published on the website, so it is clearly available for all to see the cost of any trip.

A supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplementary, yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Can the Premier advise which government departments have been tasked with implementing the commitments arising from this visit and when the House can expect a progress report?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am pretty sure that's a similar question that I already answered the last time I answered. But I will let the Honourable Member know that those matters are residing from the London office and the Assistant Cabinet Secretary are

accompanied and those matters will be dealt with in due course.

The Speaker: You have one supplementary.

No more? Thank you.

Premier, that brings a close to the questions on your first Statement.

Premier, the second Statement also has questions and it's again from MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your first question?

QUESTION 1: PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

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

Honourable Premier, your Statement repeatedly refers to *Building a Fairer Bermuda*. Can the Premier identify the objective measures the Government uses to conclude Bermuda is fairer today than it was in 2017, particularly given continued concerns over the cost of living, housing affordability, health care costs and homelessness?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let me start at the end and work to the beginning.

Tangible measures on matters related to housing, record investments in affordable housing, significant additional units delivered, mortgage guarantee programme for first-time Bermudian homeowners going inside of houses.

If we want to talk about health care, let's discuss health care again. Expansion of FutureCare, expansion of HIP, making sure additional benefits that are being given to persons underneath—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: See, Mr. Speaker, they don't want to hear it. I've got it, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Talk to the Chair.

Hon. E. David Burt: But, Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: The listening audience—

Hon. E. David Burt: I got you, Mr. Speaker, but I need to be able to make sure I concentrate because if they ask the question, I am sure that they want the answer.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, when we are talking about health care provision, Mr. Speaker, let us not forget that it was that party that cut health care provision. It was that party that tried to strip mammograms from women. It was that party that attempted that. Whereas this party

has implemented significant additional investment inside of health care in addition to expanding . . . while particular matters, and, Mr. Speaker, and,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —and, they are still going.

And, Mr. Speaker,—

The Speaker: I hear you clearly.

Hon. E. David Burt: —and, Mr. Speaker, making sure that persons are able to access preventative care without a copay. Let's go back to . . . I am trying to remember the other matters which you said.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There were so many.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am trying to remember, Mr. Speaker. I actually do not remember because I went, I went backwards to forwards.

The Speaker: Measurable benchmarks.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, but there's . . . but there's plenty. I mean, the Honourable Member had asked about matters related to fairness when it comes to the economy.

When it comes to taxes, that party had payroll taxes at the highest level in history for workers in this country. And we have managed to reduce them while making sure that wealthy persons pay more, and they did not support us increasing tax on wealthy people to cut taxes for workers, Mr. Speaker. There is a difference. That is objective fairness.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a, a supplementary or a new question?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary, okay.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Will the Premier acknowledge that many working Bermudians continue to struggle despite payroll tax reductions because increases in the cost of food, electricity, insurance, health care and housing have outpaced those savings? So, despite the monies that have been invested into the community, will the Premier, the Honourable Premier, accept that things have materially gotten worse for the community?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. And I will read my Statement again, to quote, in case the Honourable Member did not hear. "Mr. Speaker, we do not say that every challenge has been solved. But after nine years, the record is clear. This Government has guided Bermuda through a once-in-a-century pandemic, restored stability to the public finances, and made deliberate choices to build a Bermuda that is fairer, stronger, and better prepared for the future."

The Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second supplementary or a second question?

Mr. Robert King: Second supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Would the Honourable Premier accept the findings of the Cambridge Report regarding educational standing? And would he also accept the report from HOME (the charity) regarding homelessness? The Premier is suggesting that things are better because of Government's investment in the community, a fairer Bermuda.

The point is, what metrics is the Premier using? Despite the announcement that things are getting better . . . what actual evidence supports the statements that the Honourable Premier is making that things in this country have improved, according to his Ministerial Statement?

The Speaker: Okay, now, you started by referencing the Cambridge Report. Cambridge . . . I am trying to get your word. What I was going to bring to your attention, there was actually a Statement that was given by the Minister of Education referencing Cambridge.

Maybe your question would be better suited to that Minister. But then you started to rephrase your question. So, I did get uncertainty on if you wanted to—

Mr. Robert King: I crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —rephrase your question to the Premier. You can rephrase a different question. If you want to do Cambridge—

Mr. Robert King: I will speak to the Cambridge one next.

The Speaker: —that is to the Minister of Education.
Thank you.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you.

The Speaker: Okay?

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

But regarding the question concerning where is the evidence to support that the community is better off because of the investment that the Government has made, what specific measures show, apart from increased expenditures in services, that the persons in this community, their lifestyle and circumstances have improved?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, let us pretend you are a senior citizen, and your prescription drug costs are . . . well, you are.

[Laughter]

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

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: But let us pretend your prescription drug bill was \$2,500 a year. And you didn't have . . . and you had to come out of pocket. Let's pretend it was \$4,000 a year, and the limit was \$2,000. You would have had to come \$2,000 out of your pocket or find a family member. Now it is covered, Mr. Speaker.

Let us pretend that you are that Bermudian, that young Bermudian who was looking to buy a home and could not save 20 per cent for a down payment.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah! Come on!

Hon. E. David Burt: But this Government reduced it to 10 [per cent], and it had a lower interest rate. So, Bermudians can get on the housing ladder.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Come on!

Hon. E. David Burt: There are multiple examples, Mr. Speaker. Not everything is perfect. But it is so interesting that that side, Mr. Speaker, cannot even acknowledge *any* progress that has been made in this country.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Do you have a second question? You used your two supplementaries on the first question.

Mr. Robert King: Yes, a second question.

QUESTION 2: PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

Mr. Robert King: The Premier, the Honourable Premier, will have us pretend. And as long as we operate in the alternative reality of pretending, we can accept that the statements are true.

However, where is the evidence that health care costs, because of Government's contributions, are

less for persons when we have monopolies that are basically dictating how much people are going to pay? Where is the evidence that shows that the cost of living is less for persons, and fairer according to the current practices?

The Speaker: Mr. King, MP King, try and make your questions a bit more precise so we don't have to try and analyse the point that you are trying to raise.

That was a long question that went in a few directions. I am going to put two questions to the floor right now.

One, Premier, would you like to answer this now? Or do you want to come back, because it is going on 12:30?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will try to answer and hopefully the Honourable Member will then yield to allow his other Members to ask questions, as there are 11 statements and we are only on Statement number two.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that the evidence, I have repeated it, it is inside of the Statement. The Honourable Member does not want to accept that there has been progress on a number of fashions and a number of issues. That's his opinion. He can continue to do that. I am going to speak to the progress of which his Government has made.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move this Honourable House do now adjourn until 2:00 pm for lunch.

The Speaker: Are there any objections that we adjourn until 2:00 pm?

An Hon. Member: No.

The Speaker: There are none. Thank you—

[Crosstalk]

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House now stands adjourned.
Thank you.

Proceedings suspended at 12:34 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:03 pm

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

The Speaker: Members, welcome back from lunch. The House is now back in session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: When we broke for lunch, we were still in the midst of questions from this morning. There are 30 minutes and 34 seconds left on the clock for questions. We were on . . . we completed what we did in written questions, so far. We may have an opportunity to go back to what was missed if we have time on the clock.

As for the Statements, Members, we were on Statement number two, and MP King was on his feet. I believe he has finished his questions for that.

So, Premier, that will bring to a close the questions for your Statements. We will now move on in our attempt to start the clock without losing where we were. And the first Statement that has questions (so we can start on this afternoon) is the Statement [by] the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors. We'll come back to that one.

And the next question is for a Statement [by] the Minister who stuck his head up just now and smiled at me, Minister of Tourism [and Transport, Culture and Sport].

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.

Minister of Tourism, you have questions from the Opposition Whip, along with a couple of other Members. So, I'm going to start the clock now.

Opposition Whip.

[Crosstalk]

QUESTION PERIOD

[Continuation thereof]

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA'S RIDESHARING PROGRAMME, PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, and good afternoon, colleagues, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was really good to hear the numbers that the Minister gave as to how well and successful ridesharing is so far, and this is good news.

I was just curious, a quick question. Since the number of weeks, five weeks, six weeks, or whatever it has been since this has been implemented, have we received any complaints concerning ridesharing thus far?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member from the other side for that question.

And I will say that there has been a vast amount of feedback that has come from rideshare operators, and there have been no complaints that have been received by the Public Service Vehicle Licensing Board regarding public service vehicles operated by rideshare operators. So, the answer to that question is no.

However, I could say, it's not a complaint, but it's interesting, that some of the feedback from rideshare operators is that they want to do more. And they say: *Well, we would like to do more. We see people on Front Street who are waiting for a taxi, and we just want to pick them up.* And I said: *Absolutely not.* And it's, you know, very admirable to know that they see that there is a need, but they also know the regulations that we have in place, and they are adhering to them.

So, while we see that we will get more rideshare operators on the platforms, I'm happy to report that there have been no formal complaints that have come from passengers or the public when it comes to rideshare. Thank you for the question.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Pause]

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

QUESTION 1: EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon.

Honourable Minister, firstly, thank you for your immediate communication with me since you were re-appointed as the Minister and for reaching out to open up the communication with the Opposition.

My question is: Considering you have laid out how important this Education Authority is going to be, would you table the information that led to making the decision to implement the Education Authority so that we can have that information, the public can see how this decision was made prior to the debate that will happen in September?

The Speaker: Minister.

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

Mr. Speaker, there certainly will be opportunities to discuss that information in the presentation, the presentation that I've invited, that I said that I would have with the Opposition. And so we'll be able to go through that information at that particular point.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. Ben Smith: No, Mr. Speaker, second question.

The Speaker: Second question. Okay.

QUESTION 2: EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES

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

Also, considering how importantly the Education Authority is painted in the Statement that you put out this morning, and I thank you for being comprehensive on the transparency version of what needs to happen in order for us to get to this. Can the [Minister] give us any indication on the pause period of 24 months that happened when the Education Authority seemed to have been shelved, considering how important you are saying that it is now?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't say "shelved" is correct. Drafting instructions were sent to Chambers while I was still the Minister there, and drafts have been completed since then.

What we've done is, one of the things that we have heard is the . . . originally, when the drafting instructions were issued, the promise was to come back, once we had gotten the legal advice with the persons who had been consulted to get to that point, to say this is where we find ourselves. And I'm just reengaging those conversations now.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Ben Smith: Honourable Minister, were there any changes that were proposed during that 24-month period to what you had left when you were the Minister?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I can say that when we do bring this Bill in September, it will adhere to the drafting instructions that were approved by Cabinet.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Ben Smith: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Ben Smith: So, is the Minister saying that no changes have been proposed during that period where he was not the Minister?

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is how Bills are developed. Permission is sought from Cabinet for drafting instructions, and those are based on what was presented. And if there are significant changes to whatever that Bill is going to be from what was approved in Cabinet, it would have to come back to Cabinet to seek that approval. We are looking forward to moving forward with what was originally approved in Cabinet, and that will be the Bill that will come here in September.

The Speaker: New question? Those were your two supplementaries. Would you like a third question?

QUESTION 3: EDUCATION AUTHORITY BILL: PURPOSE, PROGRESS, AND PRINCIPLES

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

Mr. Speaker, will the Honourable Minister let us know whether . . . I know he's only been back in that chair for a short amount of time. Has he had an opportunity to meet with the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education to go through what is going to be expected from the Education Authority?

I know he hasn't had a lot of time to be there, but has he had the opportunity to meet with them to discuss any changes that they might have seen in the period that he was not the Minister?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken with technical staff. As I stated when I was first appointed, the priorities are making sure schools are ready in September and the Education Authority. We've made headway in both of those, so I have sat down with technical officers and discussed it.

And as I did speak to in my Statement, I've reached out and spoken with all of the aided schools and the particular unions, as well as reengaging with other persons who were involved in the process prior to my departure, Mr. Speaker. So that is where we find ourselves, and there will be more consultation that takes place as we move towards September for sure.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That would be supplementary on your third question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Ben Smith: Yes, supplementary. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Would the Minister be able to tell us whether, in his contact with the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education, there was any feedback that gave him ideas of changes that maybe they wanted to have implemented in this, considering that there was

24 months between the last time that he laid it for drafting?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, I was trying to calculate my . . . because you said 24 months, whether it was 24 months.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to take any suggestions on board and move forward from that. It's really too early to say if there might be anything significantly different from what was originally approved. But we are where we are. And we do intend to surely have those types of conversations as we move forward. But as it stands now, we are moving forward with what was originally understood that the Bill would be, based on the instructions that were issued.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Second supplementary, or are you done?

Hon. Ben Smith: That's it.

The Speaker: That's it. Okay.

Minister, we'll move on.

Minister of Home Affairs, you have questions as well, questions on your first Statement.

MP Robinson, would you like to put your questions?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: That's for the first Statement.

Oh, I'm sorry. I thought . . . I saw the top of your head. I was thinking the Minister. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. Okay. All right.

With that said, then, your written questions were to . . . your . . . your . . . the same Minister. The Minister's not here.

Let me remind Members, the business starts at two o'clock, and if you're on the Order Paper for stuff, I expect you to be here at two o'clock. Not just me, but the public. And we have time left on the Question Period. We have Members who still have questions to be answered, and unfortunately, the Minister is not here. And it does a disservice when we are going through the business of the day.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, if I could just make a comment. In addition to that, I noticed that some of the Statements were like 11 pages. I know that that is traditionally not done in the House of Parliament.

I don't know if you were going to speak to it or not, but those are unnecessarily long. Some were 9 pages, 11 pages.

You'd like to . . . Okay.

The Speaker: Yes. My office has been notified to remind Members . . . Ministers, that there is a length of . . . you try to respect when Statements are given. Okay?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. There is one Minister in the Chamber with which I had written questions for oral response, if she's willing.

The Speaker: Oh.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes, the Minister of Cabinet is here. Yes, okay. Yes.

Minister of Cabinet, yes, you're present. So, Minister of Cabinet, MP Robinson has an oral question for you, which requires an oral response. Minister, would you put your question . . . Member, would you put your question, please?

QUESTION 1: ELECTORAL REFORM WORKING GROUP UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, and thank you to the Minister for her indulgence, and yours as well, Mr. Speaker.

Will the Honourable Minister please provide this Honourable House with an update on the progress of the Electoral Reform Working Group?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as the newly appointed Minister of the Cabinet Office, I'm pleased to provide this Honourable House with an update on the progress of the Electoral Reform Working Group. The Working Group is currently reviewing the comprehensive Electoral Reform Framework, systematically addressing all four pillars of the mandate.

I remind the House that the four pillars are as follows:

- voter access and registration;
- election day processes and administration;
- campaign and election finance;
- governance and oversight.

I'm pleased to report that the group has reached the third pillar, which is campaign and election finance, entirely on schedule. To maintain this momentum, the Working Group meets twice weekly, on Wednesdays from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm and on Saturdays from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. To date, the group has held five sessions, including an informative engagement with a subject matter expert. And the meetings have been characterised as consistently lively and

thought-provoking. The effectiveness of this process has been driven by the group's composition, which represents a broad cross-section of our community. By pairing electoral and administrative expertise with community representatives, we are ensuring that a diverse range of perspectives and lived experiences directly inform this work.

While one member has resigned due to time constraints, the remaining members continue to be fully engaged and active. To ensure administrative continuity between sessions, the group is supported by a dedicated support officer. Following the recent change in ministerial responsibility, I have already met with the members to personally assure them of my continued commitment to this process and the importance of its continuity.

As this is an advisory body, the formal recommendations of the Working Group will be presented to Cabinet in due course.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Supplementary question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Just for clarity, as I know, her predecessor's deadline was September for this to be completed, I just wanted to get that pledge from the Minister that that timeline is still in play and that we will have the electoral reform table in September.

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Yes, it is, sir. And we are excited that the group is on task and on schedule, as I've just shared.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

[Pause]

The Speaker: I note that Minister Lightbourne has now joined us.

Minister, two o'clock is two o'clock when you've got matters on the table, okay?

There are questions for you in reference to your Statement, and written questions from the Member as well. We'll go to . . . which would you like to do first? Member, would you like to . . . your written question to or the Statement?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Statement, okay.

Minister, MP Robinson would like to put questions to you regarding your Statements.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is for the Affordable Agenda—

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —Statement. Yes. Correct. Okay.

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I noticed that the appreciation was extended to retail partners. I just wanted to ask the Minister: Have they shown support for the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026 that was mentioned in the Ministerial Statement?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member, and also you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence, both for the questions that he originally had written, as [I] wasn't in the House for this morning, and this afternoon for me being a little late.

But, Mr. Speaker, the Statement itself spoke to greater oversight over the Regulations. It didn't actually speak to what will be debated this afternoon. So, I will thank the Honourable Member for his questions during the debate.

The Speaker: Do you have a supplementary?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second question. Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: [I] just wanted to ask if the Cost of Living Commission has discovered any evidence of potential price gouging in Bermuda, as it was mentioned in the Statement.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Hot off the press, we actually just left the Cost of Living Commission meeting and I think that there are reservations that the Commission, on some findings, will speak to once the minutes . . . and those are finalised. I don't want to pre-empt those, but I do think that there is insightful information on the trickles of information that we have been able to receive. And what is intended is to be able to have a more accurate representation of the market and the cost of goods in support of affordability for the public.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any further questions or supplementals? None? Okay.

Would you like to move on to the second Statement then . . . Oh, MP DeCouto.

Minister, MP DeCouto would like to put questions to you.

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

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

The Honourable Minister's Statement stated that they have led the repeal and placement of the Landlord and Tenant Act and the Rent Increases [(Domestic Control)] Control Act. I hope that the Minister could educate me as to when exactly that happened because my understanding [is that] those Bills have not come to the House, and I don't see them on the Order Paper.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The revised Statement, actually, that was communicated . . . so, I don't know if you received a Statement that was not yet finalised, but the revised Statement had amended it to include consultation. And that's actually what was read. I'm sure that Hansard would also reflect the same.

And so, it speaks to the consultation, which was in the public domain, and the same Schedule and table of the consolidated feedback was also reflected.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

I mean, Mr. Speaker, I can only go with the written materials after the fact.

The Speaker: Well, put your question. Put your question.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. The Statement refers to the Bermuda Housing Corporation's (BHC) Community Solar Programme and the advantages of that. And, also, I know from some other Statements from the Minister that she seems to be in support of the extra \$100 charge for people with solar panels by BELCO.

Can the Minister comment on how that charge will impact the usefulness of the BHC's Community Solar [Pilot] Programme in reducing the people's bills?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I'm sorry. I don't know that I [am] clear on the Member's question, Mr. Speaker. Could you perhaps ask him to restate just the question?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Yes. Just clarify your question.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, given that the Statement refers to the benefits of the BHC Community Solar [Pilot] Programme, do those benefits still remain with the recent changes, including the \$100 charge per month for people with solar panels?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Mr. Speaker, I invite your feedback, but the question that the Honourable Member has raised actually relates to two separate Statements that were [given] this morning. One is relating to electricity pertaining specifically to the IRP order, and the second speaks to the Affordable Bermuda Agenda and its initiatives. So, I will seek your ruling on if they ought to be separate or they are eligible to be connected in this way.

The Speaker: Member, if you can address this one to the first Statement, it's the one we're still on right now, and then you can address the second part to the second Statement.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, the question regarding the \$100, Mr. Speaker, that's a matter of public record, so it's not actually relating to any particular Statement. That's based on information that's well known to the general public and this House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes, but we're trying to break it down so she can give a response from this particular Statement.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, yes, this is to the Statement on the update on the Affordable Bermuda Agenda.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Given that that Statement calls out the benefits of the BHC Community Solar [Pilot] Programme that have been achieved, and given the changes—the publicly available information about the changes and the rate charges for people with solar panels—do those benefits still remain through that BHC Community Solar [Pilot] Programme?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. So, you're basically asking if the benefit on affordable living that was given to persons with the solar panel is being effective under her Statement on affordable living, affordable Bermuda. Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: It would only be appropriate to give the accurate response, which is around the electricity Statement that I [gave] earlier, and I would invite the Honourable Member to give that question during that particular question, a Statement, rather, being

reviewed, and I can give the appropriate response that would inform a better answer.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: No supplementary.
Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. Good afternoon again, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister mentioned in her Statement that with the grocery stores there was a savings of \$750,000. Was that based on . . . I didn't know if it was based on actual sales, and for a year or what time period that was.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: So, as included in my Statement, the Affordable Bermuda Basket was nine months of relief that was provided in collaboration with private sector retailers and wholesalers. And so the number that was listed reflects the participation for nine months of those who submitted data. What also should be known is that not every participant submitted data, so the Ministry wasn't informed to be able to give the total, or more wholesome, picture. But at present, based on what was received by the Ministry, we did have a cumulative \$750[,000] total. Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

QUESTION 2: AFFORDABLE BERMUDA AGENDA AND AFFORDABLE BERMUDA BASKET, UPDATE

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Sure.

The Minister also talked about milk, and we heard also from the Premier that potential milk might be coming from the Azores, Portugal.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You didn't say that? What did you say?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We did not say those things.

The Speaker: They were looking at all sorts of options.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh, all sorts of options. Milk was one of those.

The Speaker: It was a fact-finding visit.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: It was a fact-finding visit.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes, yes.
I heard [the Premier] say milk.

The Speaker: All right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: [The Premier] did say milk.
Did you not say milk?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am going to point-of-order you.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Did you say milk?

The Speaker: No, no. We're trying not to go [to a] point of order. Just move on, move on, move on.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: [Restate] your question.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. So, to the Minister, concerning milk, there's no—

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You certainly don't answer nothing. You ain't got no room to talk.

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! Let's direct your question [INAUDIBLE].

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The question is: Has a look or study been looked into on how, if we're importing milk . . . which was one of those things that was stated—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is misleading the House.

There has not been any suggestion around the importation of milk. What was stated, it is clearly in the Statement, [was] that Azores has expertise in dairy

production. And, given that we would like to boost our domestic production,—

The Speaker: I did say you were on a fact-finding visit.

Hon. E. David Burt: —we are looking for experts to help to come assist. Not for importation of milk.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He was looking at cows.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: All right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What I'm trying to find out is whether or not we've looked at . . . if we're looking at all of these options on how that will also affect the local production of milk as well.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's all.

The Speaker: I believe the Statement [said it] was basically a fact-finding mission.

But, Minister, if you want to respond. You want . . . no?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's about time.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It's about time? Oh, please.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker.
And perhaps it's just my—

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Gentleman.
Premier, Premier. Deputy [Premier].
Deputy. Deputy. Deputy. Deputy!
Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah! Ah! And I'm ending it. I'm ending it right now.

Whip! You guys are going to find yourselves out of here in a minute. Real quickly.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: [INAUDIBLE] —outside.

The Speaker: No, no. I'm going to . . . no, no, no.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I am suggesting that you take a little cool-off-minute before I put you out.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: No, no, no, no. Your response. No, no, no, no. No.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I'm not putting you out. I'm asking you to take a little breather and come back. Take a little breather and come back.

Whip. Please. Take a little breather. Come back.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Take a walk.

The Speaker: And I think you should join him.
Join him.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'm walking.

The Speaker: Because I just started and you continued. Now join him.
Join him.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Out!

We're going to move on to your next Statement. The next Statement had questions from MP Robinson [also].

Would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN PAUSE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Is the Minister aware that the IRP 2026 was approved by the Regulatory Authority on July 3, 2026?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for his question—

The Speaker: Have fun, Sarge!

[Laughter]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —the IRP being finalised was not known to the Ministry. So, I do invite what he has referenced.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, the IRP 2026 is currently published on the Regulatory Authority's website, as of . . . seeing the statement from July 3. So, my supplementary is: Is there currently a breach, then, of the current policy, as the pause can only go into effect on an IRP that is in planning and not one that is finalised?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I will invite further clarity from the technical team, and I will let the Honourable Member know.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The [Minister] has indicated she'll get the right answer for you.

Do you have a supplementary, second supplementary, or second question?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: You're done?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: MP Linda Smith, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: INTEGRATED RESOURCE PLAN PAUSE AND ALIGNMENT WITH THE NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY

Ms. Linda Smith: Yes, thank you very much.

In the Statement, the Minister said that there were inconsistencies between the national policy and what was in the IRP. And my question is: What were those inconsistencies that would have caused [the Minister] to make a determination that she wanted to suspend the process?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for the question.

Since the beginning of my journey, I have sought an array of technical input from those who have successfully supported larger and arguably more progressive electricity sectors both in other comparable Caribbean islands or . . . and islands, and also the US and Africa. And what was clear is that an IRP that doesn't contemplate current state of a grid, which is, to

what extent can new technologies even be connected to it, was an omission. And so, the public transparency of grid conditions and the impact that, for example, new technologies, could have to the grid to current users was one of the areas that was raised. Additionally, I think it is also prudent for a government, in forecasting a future sector, to also consider the workforce that it seeks to empower to take that role.

I identified as part of my May 2025 ministerial directive that capacity building was important. The existence of one consultant for a long period of time could suggest a number of things. But I thought it was prudent for us to build capacity so that Bermudians could take their rightful role in our electricity sector in a more diverse way.

Also, there were questions around procurement. You would note that the procurement process regarding the old IRP from 2019 had not advanced to the extent that it did. And so, I do question the players and the intentions that would rush to get, having signalled, having consulted, having engaged that from 2019 until present there was an absence of progress. The Ministry would signal, communicate, consult, and say, these are our intentions.

We accept that we, as a Government, were delayed in our policy. And so, in one year did a robust process to both get an updated policy reflective of not only the future sector but the current sector in Bermuda. We would do that. We would signal. We would have biweekly meetings with the Regulatory Authority, inform them of the fact that we wished to do that.

And so, I do find it interesting that, you know, there could be a rush at the same time that we're seeking to pause it to right-size the transition. And the question then becomes: Whom does it serve?

The Ministry represents the people. It represents the cost. It represents what we have allowed and committed to have oversight over, and that is around advancing affordability. And so, the structures and systems that could enhance transparency, I do invite those things because we collaboratively in Bermuda require and can do better on behalf of the people. I think one of the colleagues spoke earlier to the increase in cost for distributed DG [Distributed Generator] customers, the customers who would have their own solar deployed.

This shouldn't be a space where for years there have been residential customers and those who don't have solar technologies deployed in their home paying the cost that they would be benefiting from.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Time has run out on the Question Period this morning, Members. Thank you for your participation. [We will move on] to the next item on the Order Paper.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: I'm going to acknowledge MP from [constituency] 28 first, MP Lister.

MP Lister, you have the floor for three minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You will understand why. Go ahead, MP.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to first off give obituary and condolences to the family of a young Dr. Jocelyn [Patrice] Nzabalinda, who passed recently. Her maiden name [was] Woodson. I'd like to recognise her father, who actually travelled from overseas to—

The Speaker: He's in the Gallery now.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —Bermuda. He's in the [Gallery] now. They will be holding a memorial for her before she has a full funeral overseas back home.

She was a physical therapist—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you to the House.

She was a physical therapist and not only was her husband a friend of our family, but in her role as a physical therapist she actually . . . My grandmother, your mother, was a client of hers. So, we knew her in a professional and a familiar sense.

So again, I'd like to send condolences to her father, her mother, and her siblings, and all of her friends and extended family.

On a lighter note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to send congratulations to . . . In volleyball, the under-20 women's volleyball championships won a gold medal in St. Kitts recently. And the two young ladies, Olivia Gazzard and Isabella Souza, won gold medals at the Eastern Caribbean Volleyball Association.

Also winning awards, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Caitlin Bobb finished third at the Jerome Classic in British Columbia. And this is as she warms up to compete in the Commonwealth Games soon coming, so it's good that she's placing on the podium in her warm-ups.

And then young Sakari Famous, she won gold medal in high jumps . . . I associate—

An Hon. Member: Associate the House.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —I associate the whole House.

She won gold medal in high jump at the Ed Murphey Classic in Tennessee.

So, Mr. Speaker, as always, these are Bermudians, young and a little bit older, representing Bermuda on the international stage and competing and doing well.

But lastly, Mr. Speaker, I want to send congratulations. And I will associate the whole House on the recent acknowledgement of Flora Duffy, her retirement from the triathlete world.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I see the Minister of Sport. I will let him make further comments. I won't go too far. But Ms. Duffy winning and representing Bermuda on a very big stage, the Triathlons, Olympic Games, winning gold medals and all. She has definitely put Bermuda on the spot. And so, in her retirement, we wish her well and that hopefully she can use her experience, come back and train and pass it on to young Bermudians.

And I do, before I sit down, Mr. Speaker, just also in my comments on condolences to Dr. Nzabalinda, I forgot to mention her husband, Zakary, also. So again, I'd like to send condolences to them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Sport, would you like your three minutes now?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, I will.

The Speaker: I think you got a launching pad that time.

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

Mr. Speaker, on the spirit of cricket and one of Bermuda's national sports,—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Owen Darrell: —I'd like to start here, Mr. Speaker. And I know it may not be directly Bermudian, but it is definitely connected to Bermuda.

I would like to acknowledge and send condolences to all cricket fans as the sad news has come in this morning of the passing of Sir Garfield Sobers, one of the greatest cricketers, as they say, of all time, a West Indies all-rounder and a legend. Also, for those Bajans, who are part of our community, he is a national hero of his native Barbados. And while I say cricket fans in Bermuda would have received this news with sadness, as many of us know that Barbados was one of the places, especially in the 1980s, where many Bermudians used to flock to take part in the West [Indies] Test Cricket that used to happen around April every year. So, that news has come in, and I just want to send

condolences to all cricket fans as this news has come in.

And on that same note, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to cricket, I want to turn the tide a little bit and say congratulations to Ms. Terry-Lynn Paynter, who is a Bermudian. Many would know Terry-Lynn in her time as a thrower in track and field recently. But Terry-Lynn Paynter has been appointed as head coach of the America's Next Generation Women's Team. Ms. Paynter is also the vice president of the Eastern Counties Cricket Association, and they are embarking on, I would say one of the greatest cricket tournaments that we have here in Bermuda, the Eastern County, which starts tomorrow with the Holders champions. Cleveland County Cricket Club will be taking on Bailey's Bay—

Hon. E. David Burt: Bailey all the way.

Hon. Owen Darrell: And I want to say congratulations to all of the cricketers who have been . . . been . . .

An Hon. Member: Selected.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Selected (thank you) to take part in the first round of the Eastern County, which is tomorrow at Lord's. And we will be there bright and early in our blue and white, as those boys, as they say, from Harris Bay, they are Devils' Hole boys—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: (There is no hole like Devil's Hole.) —go down to hold the Cup at Eastern County tomorrow.

And finally, in the last 30 seconds that I have, the headlines around the world are *one of the greatest athletes of all time*. And I'd like to, as I've already put in the public domain I want to put on the floor of the House, [say] congratulations and job well done to Dame Flora Duffy—Bermuda's only Olympic gold medalist—for the stellar career that she has had as a triathlete around the world. Much has been said, and much will be said, about her amazing career. And I want to say job well done to Flora Duffy.

[Timer chimes]

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Opposition Leader, would you like your three minutes?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, I want to follow along where he Honourable Minister just left off and be associated with the remarks for Flora Duffy.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: It's already been associated with everybody, but I just want to make sure, obviously, as somebody who coached her when she was a young swimmer in Bermuda—

Some Hon. Members: Aww!

An Hon. Member: I got you. I got you.

Hon. Ben Smith: —this is a long process.

The truth of the matter is starting at Port Royal Primary School with the gym programme there, thanking Mr. Custodio for taking her on those runs during lunchtime and building that love for the running. She has been a passionate athlete from the time of those early schoolgirl days, and to see that she went from those early beginnings all the way to the podium for Bermuda, winning that gold medal. Congratulations for a long career where she did Bermuda proud all over the world. *Thank you for representing us at the highest level.*

I hope that we'll see her do many more things in this next phase of her life. I did have an opportunity to talk to her when the King visited, and she was trying to figure out what she was going to do next. So, continue to put in that same level of effort in whatever your next endeavour is, and congratulations for that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to say good luck to all of our athletes that have . . . some have already started to travel for both the CAC Games and Commonwealth Games that will happen in the period while the House is not in session. We have an almost record number of athletes who will be participating in CAC Games in Dominican Republic, and a very strong team also going to Glasgow for Commonwealth Games.

Bermuda has continued to punch above its weight, as we just spoke about with Flora Duffy. Good luck to all of the athletes, all the administrators, and all the coaches who have done a lot of hard work over this last season to prepare these athletes to compete for Bermuda. So best of luck to all of them. [We are] looking forward to seeing what the performances will be at both those games.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Before I call on anybody, I just want to acknowledge, because they are about to leave, I just want to acknowledge that Dr. Woodson is in the Chamber, as we said earlier, and add my condolences to it.

It's nice to have you visit with us. It is unfortunate under the circumstances but feel free anytime you're in Bermuda again to come visit in our Chambers.

And in acknowledging you, I'd also like to acknowledge our very own, Dr. Shammah Williams, who brought him in this afternoon. And I assume that's Joycelyn's brother next to you?

[No audible response]

The Speaker: No? Okay. Well, all right.

Well, condolences to the family, and our thoughts and prayers are with you at this time, Doctor. Best to you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, continuing]

The Speaker: Minister, you have your three minutes.

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

Mr. Speaker, it is with heavy heart that I would like condolences sent to the family of Winston Kelly, [PHONETIC] who passed away yesterday, Mr. Speaker. Winston Kelly is my former father-in-law and grandfather to my daughter. Obviously, I've known them quite well and travelled with Mr. Kelly. I know one of our favourite moments was taking him to his first NFL football game in Tampa Bay, Florida, on one family vacation that we were on. He will be sorely missed by the Hamilton Parish community, by Better [Covenant] Christian Fellowship of which he was an elder. And my deepest condolences sent to his wife, Marjorie Kelly, [PHONETIC] as they navigate. And of course, his daughter, my ex-wife and mother to my daughter, Leticia, [PHONETIC] as they navigate this difficult time.

On a brighter note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to associate myself with all the accolades to all the athletes, and especially to the Eastern County and Cleveland County.

Mr. Speaker, I know this one . . . this one . . . I've had on my notes, but I'm just really getting to it. I'd also like to send congratulations to the congregation of St. Philip AME, that little church by the Sound, who celebrated 100 years in their current location.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And associate MP Tucker as well.

[They] celebrated 100 years in their current location in Harrington Sound, back in June. I'll be back

here again in October. They will be celebrating 141 years of ministry—41 years, of course, happened in that other place known as Tucker's Town, before they were forced to relocate to their current location. So definitely, congratulations.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Congratulations to that and, hopefully, later on I will speak a little bit more to that during motion to adjourn.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Scott, you were on your feet earlier.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want the House to send letters of congratulations (I'm a little conflicted doing it during this time of year) to the Dolan [PHONETIC] family from St. George's as they have expanded their gas station locations to take over the East Broadway gas station. And so, for me, as a small business, I would think that that's a big deal. And I like the fact that they are trending towards the west. So hopefully that will speak to their Cup Match allegiance as well.

But I wanted to really just make sure that—

An Hon. Member: That's a stretch.

[Laughter]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: I just wanted to make sure that we send congratulations and let just to know that small businesses are thriving and growing here in Bermuda.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Minister Dill.

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to offer my sincere condolences to the family of the late Vivienne Louise Anderson. She is a retired Episcopal supervisor in the AME church. She was born and raised in Somerset. And then she and her beau, who is the late Bishop Vinton Randolph Anderson, who was the first Bermudian to be elected to the episcopacy in the AME church, made their home overseas and they made an impact on the world stage. Mrs. Anderson was an outstanding role model. She was a lady of both excellence and elegance. She represented Bermuda well as she supported her husband as he made inroads, as a trailblazer, as a change-maker, and as a leader par excellent. So, we certainly will miss her. She lived to be 95 years of age, and she was funeralised last week in St. Louis, Missouri.

Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to offer condolences to the family of Mrs. Lynda Orletta Bean. She is the

mother of Terrence and Jonathan Bean and Dawnika Ebbin. She is a resident of constituency 36 and she was the lady who—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —and I'd like to associate, yes, MP Robin—

An Hon. Member: Tucker.

The Speaker: Robinson, he grew up [INAUDIBLE].

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: MP Dwayne Robinson—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: —with those condolences.

And Mrs. Lynda Bean, she was a founding member of Agape Faith Fellowship. She was a wonderful lady, and she will be deeply missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member . . . MP Swan, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to be associated with the condolences offered by the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture [and Sport] to the people of Barbados and the family of the late Sir Garfield Sobers. I had the honour of knowing Mr. Sobers because Mr. Sobers used to spend time in Bermuda with his connection with Trusthouse Forte and his love for golf. So, we had opportunities to play golf in the past at Riddell's Bay.

I remember fondly posing the question to him: *How did he play his innings in?* Relating it to my discipline of trying to get settled first before you got on a roll. He said, *I took every ball on its merit, and if it came wrong first ball, it was going long.* And I never forgot that, and it actually changed my philosophy and approach to playing. I looked for the opportunities early rather than waiting to be played in. And he was certainly a global hero, and he followed the three Ws: the Weekes, the Worrells . . . and what was the other "W"?

An Hon. Member: Walcott.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And Walcott. That's right. Great, great, great cricketers.

And he remembered my Uncle Sheridan Raynor when I played with them because Sheridan was a well-respected left-hand batsman, opening batsman, early order batsman. And [Mr.] Sobers has had many connections here with the late Charles Daulphin and others. I'm sure Alma "Champ" Hunt as well.

I would like, through the Bermuda Football Association, to have a letter sent to the Cabo Verde football national team, who Bermuda played as a warm-up just prior to the World Cup. They have shown what sport can do for a nation. More people are googling Cabo Verde today because of their national programmes. And they, like Bermuda, do not have a lot of First Division players. They have a lot of players situated in Ireland, like we did with the late Freddie Hall Jr., who played in the Irish League, and they have lower league players. But they came together as a country and showed the world.

And what's ironic is that Cabo Verde did not lose against Spain, the finalists. And they did not lose in 90 minutes, full-time, against Argentina, who are the two finalists. That shows you that small nations can punch above their weight.

And finally, I didn't get an opportunity to express my profound gratitude for the movie-produced documentary on what many Bermudans believe should be Sir Clyde Best. I was somewhat disappointed in the honours to not see it there. If anybody, and I don't care what you think and why you think it, but if anybody traversed this world singularly in a sport, I have a little experience in that,—

[Timer chimes]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —that man did it to the highest order and deserves his accolades globally, just like [Mr.] Sobers.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Lightbourne?

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

I quickly rise just to acknowledge and also send condolences to the family and friends and to the community relating to the death and the passing of Mr. Kenneth "Kenny" DeFontes, not only as a Minister responsible for telecommunications and broadcasting, having a personal connection with my father, having been once employed at VSB back in the day. And I want to just acknowledge his contribution to the broadcasting segment through television services, providing entertainment—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —associating MP Swan with this—

An Hon. Member: The whole House.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —and the whole House on the passing of just a broadcasting giant, who kind of knew . . . and I was a product of his time and was able

to not only innovate but to be able to produce what we then learnt or had as one of two evening night news reports. And so, I want to just acknowledge his commitment to his daughters who are mourning his loss and to his family and his special friends. So, I want to just acknowledge that today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: You have your three minutes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon to offer condolences to the family of the late Perry Mason.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Mason was a constituent of mine. He was the husband of Francine Mason, and the father of Janee, Sydney, and Ryley Mason. I want to send condolences to the family at this sad time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Got you.

I associate MP Weeks.

On a brighter note, Mr. Speaker, I'd like the House to offer congratulations to Dr. Katurah Horton-Perinchief (I think your constituent) who recently was awarded her doctoral degree in public health leadership. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to . . . MP Simmons.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

Mr. Speaker, if you don't mind, I wish to send condolences to the family of the Seventh-day Adventist family, and that will be in the name of Mrs. Carol Bassett and also of, I believe, Lorraine Simon.

The Speaker: Associate yourself. It was done last week.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Oh, I apologise. They were done last week? I will take my seat.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, no.

Mr. Scott Simmons: I associate myself. Thank you so much.

The Speaker: Go right ahead. I'm not sitting you down. I'm not sitting you, but you can associate yourself with [the one done] last week. That's all.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in association with those comments made last week, I knew Carol Bassett. We know in education, she served most admirably, and certainly in the church family she served. She was my sabbath schoolteacher. She was rather strict, but she was certainly interested in us as young people. And as a result, you see the product.

Also, I'd like to mention Lorraine Simons, Sister Lorraine Simons, who certainly was a fixture of Southampton Church, of the Adventist Church. And there are so many in our community who are associated with their churches, turn out so many good young people and are interested in the well-being both of those young people and of the church at large.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

Any other?

There are none other.

Before we move on, I'd just like to add my sentiments to some of the remarks that have been said already. I'll start with some of the last ones through the remarks that were given to the family of Lorraine Simons. I think we all know her son, Owen Simons, and the choir that he directs. Well, we send condolences to his father and sister and the entire family.

To the condolences given just now to the Bean family for Lynda Bean. I've known Lynda for a number of years. But in my early days in political life, I represented at Dockyard, and she was one of those in the Dockyard area. Like Mr. Robinson's family, who worked real hard with us in Dockyard back then. So, Mr. Robinson, I understand why you want to be associated too. So, my condolences go to her family.

But in this Chamber, her son, Terrence, handles most of our technical stuff behind Mr. [Derek] Lamb here. So, we feel it here, and I send our condolences to him as well.

And to the remarks on the passing of Perry Mason, to his wife, Francine, my condolences are shared with those that have been sent already.

With that, we'll move on [to] the next item on the Order Paper today.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

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

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: There are three Government Bills to be introduced this afternoon.

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: The first [Government Bill] is in the name of the Premier.

BILL

FIRST READING

TRUSTEE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting, and that is the Trustee Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next Bill to be introduced is in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting, namely, the Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The next item is in the name of the Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

BILL

FIRST READING

MOTOR CAR AND AUXILIARY BICYCLES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Motor Car and Auxiliary Bicycles (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2026.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Opposition Bills

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are no Private Members' Bills.

NOTICE OF MOTION

The Speaker: There are no Notice of Motion.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: I had indicated to the Premier and Opposition Leader that I was going to make an announcement at this time. I've been stuck in the Chair and didn't resolve what I needed to, so I will make sure it gets done before the day ends under all of this.

So, the first item this afternoon is the second reading of the Corporate Tax Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

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

BILL

SECOND READING

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it is my distinct honour and privilege on behalf of the Government to rise this afternoon in this Honourable House to introduce and lead the debate on the Bill entitled, the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026.

This Bill proposes amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023 to provide miscellaneous updates to enhance Bermuda's corporate income tax regime and to better facilitate the filing of tax returns. It proposes to make consequential amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background, the Corporate Income Tax Act has been in force since December 2023, with most of the Act operational from January 2025. And Bermuda has now entered the full operative phase of the corporate income tax. As the regime has moved forward, several components have required refinement to ensure the framework remains aligned with international standards, reflects practical implementation needs, and provides clarity for both taxpayers and administrators.

The Corporate Income Tax Agency continued with its standard practice of public consultation on proposed amendments to the CIT Act, accompanied with the publication of an illustrative Bill. We have taken the time to review all valuable feedback received to support the development of robust and practical legislation as we continue to evolve our framework.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments relate to providing for the better administration of the corporate income tax regime and to better facilitate the filing of tax returns. The Government finds that there is a need to ensure [that] the administration of the corporate income tax is founded upon clear legal principles. Therefore, the purpose of these amendments is to clarify and refine the existing provisions to ensure that the Corporate Income Tax Agency is given the administrative and operational mechanisms to effectively oversee and administer the corporate income tax regime.

Mr. Speaker, for those changes, consequential amendments were proposed to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024 to ensure the legislation remains aligned with the updated corporate income tax framework. The consequential amendment clarifies the enforcement regime to be applied by the Corporate Income Tax Agency.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to emphasise the Government remains confident that Bermuda's corporate tax framework upholds Bermuda's strong commitment to global compliance and transparency while maintaining the Island's respected reputation internationally, or I should say boosting it, certainly, as we cannot be referred to as a tax haven. The progress achieved thus far has been made possible through the invaluable contribution of the International Tax Working Group, whose expertise and dedication continue to play a central role in advancing this important initiative.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: No fighting now.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Doctor DeCouto.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I am going to knock . . . at a good time.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Members.

Hon. E. David Burt: I would like to sincerely thank everyone in the Ministry of Finance, the Corporate Income Tax Agency, along with our dedicated advisors, for the time, effort, and expertise that have contributed to this work.

I also extend my appreciation to the drafting team at the Attorney General's Chambers for their valued support throughout this process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

MP DeCouto.

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

Yes, we definitely support this Bill. You know, we did review the consultation documents. We did our own [due] diligence and research and [we are] also grateful to the Ministry of Finance for reaching out to us in case we needed any clarifications. So, as always, we are appreciative of the efforts of the Finance Minister and Premier and his Financial Secretary and that team.

The Premier mentioned clarity. He mentioned enforcement. We know that in Bermuda one of the benefits of our jurisdictions is, in fact, regulatory clarity. People know what they're signing up for. They can be confident in how it's going to progress. They know how situations will be handled in the law and in our judicial system. And so, we are also glad to see that issues around . . . I don't want to say "issues," but, you know, certain clarifications have been made with respect to the Corporate Income Tax Agency enforcement.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, we certainly do support this Bill. And are glad to see it forming part of this important part of Bermuda's economic success.

But, we wish—

Some Hon. Members: Aah!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But, Mr. Speaker, we wish the Government—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —could bring this kind of clarity,—

An Hon. Member: Aah!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —collaboration, and success in the many other areas challenging this country.

An Hon. Member: There we go.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

No other Member?
Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support of the Opposition, and I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: MP . . . Deputy Premier? Deputy—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You're not putting me back on the naughty step are you?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker, would you take the Chair to move the House—

[Pause]

House in Committee at 3:05 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Members. I'm a bit hoarse. I lost my voice. I don't know how.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Chairman: Yes, it's from that.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: We are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: But you see our Somerset supporters [INAUDIBLE]. I'll give you water because we know—

The Chairman: This is St. George's—

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, don't worry because—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There will be plenty of water up there.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam [Chairman], you are hoarse today; you are going to be crying tomorrow.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: No tears.

Hon. E. David Burt: No tears?

The Chairman: No tears.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. I would like to move all the clauses.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none. Continue.

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

Before I go to clause 1, just the overview again for the purpose, for the record, that this Bill seeks to amend the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023 to provide for the better administration of the corporate income tax regime, to better facilitate the filing of tax returns and to make consequential amendments to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024.

The Government finds there is a need to ensure that the administration of the corporate income tax is founded upon clear legal principles. Therefore, the purpose of these amendments is to clarify and refine the existing provisions to ensure that the corporate income tax agency is given the administrative and operational mechanisms to effectively oversee and administer the corporate income tax regime.

If I may now, clauses 1 through 17.

Clause 1 provides for the citation of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends the interpretation under section 2 by removing redundant definitions and inserting a new definition for “five-year election.”

Clause 3 amends section 6 to provide additional provisions for the calculation of the opening tax loss carry forward and adjustments that may arise in relation to the calculations.

Clause 4 provides for additional clarification to section 7 to ensure that the provisions within section 7 are consistent with each other.

Clause 5 amends section 15 to provide greater clarity over elections that can be made by segregated accounts companies.

Clause 6 amends section 15(1)A . . . sorry.

The Chairman: [Section] 15A.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes. [Section] 15A. I want to make sure I get it right for the Hansard.

Clause 6 amends section 15A to correct a typographical error.

Clause 7 amends section 18 to correct a typographical error.

Clause 8 inserts a new subsection under section 21 to address the issues arising where there is a mismatch between the financial reporting period for a Bermuda Constituent Entity and the period used by its ultimate parent entity in preparing consolidated financial statements for the group.

Clause 9 amends the marginal note in section 24 so that it better reflects the contents of the section.

Clause 10 amends the marginal note in section 25 so that it better reflects the contents of the section.

Clause 11 amends section 30 to correct a typographical error.

Clause 12 amends section 46B by providing that penalties that are assessed by reference to the time elapsed continue to accrue for so long as a default is outstanding, notwithstanding the date on which a taxpayer is notified of the penalty and providing also that penalties calculated by reference to outstanding amounts shall be automatically recalculated where the underlying outstanding amount changes due to amendments to tax returns.

Clause 13 amends section 46D to provide greater clarity in the calculation of penalties for the failure to file a return by the due date and also provides in subsection (3) that a penalty may not be imposed for an indefinite period.

Clause 14 amends section 46F to correct a typographical error.

Clause 15 amends section 49 to address the additional flexibility in making and revoking a five-year election.

Clause 16 inserts a new section 49A to grant the Agency power to permit a revocation of an election within the five-year election period as defined under section 2.

And finally, Madam Chairman, clause 17 provides for a consequential amendment to the Corporate Income Tax Agency Act 2024 to clarify the enforcement

regime to be applied by the Corporate Income Tax Agency.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to the clauses?

There are not.

Premier, continue.

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

I move that clauses 1 through 17 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 17 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are not.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 17 passed.]

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

I move the preamble.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

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

I move the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Are there any objections? There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:10 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. It has been reported as printed.

That will take us on to the next item on the Order Paper this afternoon, which is the second reading of the Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors. Minister.

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

I move that the Bill entitled the Human Rights Amendment Act of 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

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

BILL

SECOND READING

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to introduce in this Honourable House today a Bill entitled the Human Rights Amendment Act 2026. I would like to start by sharing with Honourable Members and the listening public this meaningful quote by Barbra Streisand: "How I wish we lived in a time when laws were not necessary to safeguard us from discrimination." This quote reinforces our reality and the importance of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends the Human Rights Act of 1981, on the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission [HRC], to close gaps in Bermuda's anti-discriminatory protections, particularly in housing, and the provision of goods, facilities, and services. It protects people who rely on government financial support from being refused housing or services on that basis, and a landlord's exception that currently permits discrimination in certain residential buildings, and prohibits discrimination against a person because of their association with someone who has a protected characteristic.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill aims to strengthen and improve the Government's social protections for persons within the community by closing identified gaps in Bermuda's current human rights legislation. These proposed amendments ensure the public have further human rights protections on specific matters, and the HRC maintains international standards.

Mr. Speaker, despite the existing protections with the Human Rights Act of 1981 against discrimination regarding accommodation, an exception set out in section 4(4)(a) allows landlords to discriminate in relation to letting one or two independent units in the building in which they or their family reside, a familiar arrangement in Bermuda. It is evident from the feedback

provided that members in our community are being discriminated against while residing in such accommodation and seeking to rent these properties in Bermuda. Ultimately, this frustrates the fundamental human right recognised in international law, the right to housing, at a time when the Island is facing a housing crisis.

Also, it prevents the Human Rights Act aligning with human rights legislation in similar jurisdictions, such as, Turks and Caicos, and the Cayman Islands, who have not included a similar exception. Mr. Speaker, currently under the Human Rights Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against, harass, or victimise individuals based on the following protected characteristics: race, colour, place of origin, ethnic and national origin, sex, sexual orientation, family status, marital status or domestic partnership status, disability, religion or belief, political opinion, criminal record, and in certain circumstances, age.

However, there is no protected characteristic that prohibits discrimination on the basis of a person receiving government funding, which was introduced under specific legislation, such as the Financial Assistance Act of 2001 and the Child Day Care Allowance Act of 2008, to ensure an individual can maintain a basic standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, although members of the community are protected from discrimination based on their own protected characteristics, as outlined in the Human Rights Act at present, these protected characteristics do not extend to persons who associate with them. As a result, the Human Rights Act fails to provide protection from discrimination by association when a person is denied an employment opportunity due to the political opinions of an individual that they associate with. This currently is not discriminatory under the law. Or a landlord refuses to rent an apartment to an individual because their cousin has a criminal record or their business partner is from the Philippines. Both examples are not deemed discriminatory under the current law.

The Speaker: He needs a jacket. He needs a jacket.

Sarge, sort him out, please.

Yes, continue.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission held several consultations with stakeholders representing various sectors of our community, such as members of the public, government units and departments, advisory and regulatory bodies, i.e., Ageing and Disability Services, Age Concern and the Disability Advisory Council. Participants had the opportunity to provide information about challenges they experienced, or experiences they were aware of other people experiencing when seeking, occupying or purchasing housing, discriminatory practices against persons receiving financial assistance and child day care allowance, which are financially supported, governed by legislation, to ensure an individual can maintain a basic standard of living, and discrimination experienced

because of a person's association with another, based on, for example, the race, colour, or political opinions associated with the individual.

The amendments, Mr. Speaker, are grounded in the Human Rights Commission's consultation process. A stakeholder's consultation from 4 November through 31 December 2022 . . . 37 stakeholders invited, 6 provided feedback, in an island-wide public consultation from 23 March to 14 April 2023, [with] 44 anonymous public responses.

These serve as concrete discrimination with no recourse under the current Human Rights Act, including landlords refusing tenants who receive financial assistance, rental advertisements labelled "no financial assistance," and complaints to the Human Rights Commission, where section 4(4)(a) stripped the complainant of any remedy under section 4(1).

Mr. Speaker, we have listened to our stakeholders, and this Bill is part of our response in addressing their concerns. This Bill proposes to amend the Human Rights Act by removing provisions in legislation that currently allow landlords to discriminate against persons in relation to the letting of one or two independent units in the building in which they or their family reside, introducing protections against discrimination based on an individual being in receipt of government funding, specifically financial assistance, financial assistance short-term relief benefit, and the child day care allowance, and include provisions that prohibit discrimination because of a person's association with another person.

Mr. Speaker, these protections available under the Human Rights Act were based on the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as proclaimed by the United Nations. The proposed amendments set out in the Bill uphold these foundations and increase the effectiveness of the Human Rights Act. The Bill expressly guarantees [that] legal protections are introduced into the Human Rights Act to ensure persons in the community seeking housing, or residing in rented accommodations, are treated equally and their rights are protected from discrimination and harassment.

Persons who are in receipt of a financial assistance award and a child day care allowance are protected against discrimination based on being in receipt of government funding. And persons who are experiencing discrimination because they are associated with another person, their rights are protected from discrimination, harassment, victimisation and marginalisation.

Mr. Speaker, the Human Rights Commission will exercise their authority under section 14B of the Act to prepare and publish public guidelines on the meaning of family status and on what may be considered valid reasons relevant to the nature of a particular offence in section 2(2)(a)(vii). To safeguard vulnerable persons in a landlord's family, children, persons with disabilities and seniors, where a person convicted of

certain offences seeks accommodations in a unit adjacent to such a family.

Mr. Speaker, the strengthening of our human rights legislation removes limitations on person's human dignity, respect and the right to equal treatment that is owed to all members of our community. This Government supports the empowerment and protection of our people through this Bill. These amendments are intended as phase one of a multi-stage review of the Human Rights Act to address protections needed within Bermuda's human rights legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would like for us to be reminded of the words of Malcolm X, "I believe in human beings, and that all human beings should be respected as such, regardless of their colour."

In closing, I would like to add I believe in human beings and that human beings should be respected as such regardless of any characteristics such as their race, place of origin, colour, ethnic or national origin, sex, sexual orientation, marital or domestic partnership status, disability, family status, religion, political opinion or criminal record.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Tucker, you have the floor.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you. Thank you very much to the Minister. (Sorry, I have an issue with my microphone.) Thank you very much to the Minister for bringing this Bill.

I will be very honest. I struggled with this a little bit. And I struggled with it because how I am viewing this Bill is through the lens of everyday people. And while we are in here to make legislation, after we pass these Bills everyday people are going to be impacted by whatever decisions that are made. And that causes me a lot of anxiety because I understand and acknowledge the weight that we all collectively carry when we pass legislation in this House.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will say that I do not disagree with anything that the Minister has just said. I do not think that there's anybody in this House that would agree with outwardly discriminating against people for any reason. At least I would hope not. But, Mr. Speaker, when I read this Bill . . . and first of all . . . sorry, I want to just go back and say thank you to the Minister because she did invite me and Senate and a few others, along with the Human Rights Commission, to review the proposed changes that they were going to make. But, Mr. Speaker, when I consider the potential impact that making some of these changes will have, it keeps me up. Like, it worries me. Because, again, I am looking

at it through the lens of when everyday people are impacted by the decisions that are made in here.

I do not believe that there is . . . I think the intent of the Bill is great. I think it's wonderful. But, to me, there are some pieces that I actually would like to see and have some assurance about. Because I know that everyday Bermudians are going to want to have that assurance as well.

So, broadly, there is going to be a section that, as the Minister mentioned, that talks about prohibiting discrimination by association. Mr. Speaker, we don't have a statutory definition for that. Which actually leaves the whole concept very broad. And that's a little problematic in my mind because, again, we are being asked . . . I understand that guidelines will be coming and the like. But we are being asked to support and approve a Bill without having the fulsome information that's going to impact everyday Bermudians.

Now, I understand, again, that the guidelines will be coming. But how are we going to make sure that granny understands what those guidelines are? Because that's going to be important. Because she's going to be impacted. We have a number of people who currently rent their dwelling units. And what we're saying is that those people do not have the ability, or will not have the ability, in the strictest of sense, to say who and who they do not wish to have in their units.

Now, again, I will circle back to what I originally said. And that is, no, we don't want to discriminate against people, anyone. But, again, there is a fine line between not discriminating against tenants, but then discriminating against—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the Member is unintentionally misleading the House. A landlord can still decide who they will put in their rental unit, Mr. Speaker. So, I don't want to go down this road, Mr. Speaker, saying that we are removing landlords' rights, because we are not.

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

So, since we're there, there is a section that is being removed from the [Act]. It's a section that actually speaks to owners being prohibited from discrimination in renting units, buildings with two or three family units, where the owner occupies one, or if the owner's family occupies one.

So, I'm not . . . And, again, I would invite the Minister at some point to be able to provide some additional clarification, because I did submit some questions to her about that. But, again, I'm looking at this

through the lens of how this will be interpreted by everyday people, by landlords.

I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, how difficult it is to ensure that we have adequate housing stock. Right? Because we all know in here that there are people with apartments who have decided that they will not rent, whether it's to Bermudians or Black people, White people, whatever. They've just decided to take them off the market. So, we have one situation that we are trying to fix. But we could be potentially creating—unintentionally, I should say—another issue.

So, to my mind, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is putting the cart before the horse. To my mind, Mr. Speaker, we should be debating right now the Landlord and Tenant Act. We need to get that sorted first before we start traversing down a road that will have potential negative impacts for people.

I would ask the Minister, or I would invite the Minister, to let us know at some point if the guidelines that have been mentioned, which will be created by the Human Rights Commission . . . how does the Government intend to support small landlords in their understanding and applying the new discrimination by association provision, given its breadth and its potential complexity?

I would also like to know, Mr. Speaker, has the Government conducted any assessment of the potential impact on rental supply resulting from the removal of section 4(4)(a), protections for landlords? And if so, would the Minister be willing to table that report?

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to know when does the Government intend to bring forward a modernised Landlord and Tenant Act to ensure that expanded human rights obligations are supported by a coherent rental framework?

When we think of all those things, Mr. Speaker, I would ask a question, because we've all heard the stories. I rented to people who were on financial assistance. Right? I've done that. I've rented apartments for aeons. And I've had some great experiences. But I've also equally had experiences that have not been great. They have been nightmares. So, what protections do we have for landlords? Because if we're talking about you can't prohibit, or you can't discrim— . . . I think that's the word, yes, discriminate by association . . . we're such a small community . . . let's talk about the practicalities of these things.

So, we are a small community. And so, if Cousin JJ is involved in a gang, the whole community knows it. And he's coming to rent granny's apartment, and she's the only one living there. And she doesn't want that person in there because she understands. She's lived in the neighbourhood long enough. She knows the individuals. So, we're saying that granny could potentially be called before a Human Rights Tribunal to explain why she, at 80 years old, doesn't want somebody who is deemed unsavoury living in her house?

I have no concern, Mr. Speaker, again, about making sure that we are not discriminating against people. My concern, Mr. Speaker, is that we make sure that we are balanced. We've got to be balanced, because we could sit in here and pretend that we are living this whole wonderful life and everything will be great. And we will just tell people that this is what they need to do. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, once we all go home and sign off on this—because the Government has the majority, I have no expectation that they're not going to support this Bill—it will be done. But what I want us to remember is that whatever we support here today, or whatever they support here today, will impact every single person in this country.

And I want to end with this, Mr. Speaker. What do we tell the prison officers and the police officers when they have people with criminal records who they've dealt with, and someone that just wants to stir the pot? These are the practicalities and the realities of the things that we are living in this country. And so, then they, other people, get pulled up into the Human Rights Tribunal. And we also heard just earlier today that there's going to be a Landlord and Tenant Tribunal.

So, all I'm asking, Mr. Speaker, is that we rise and report [progress] on this particular Bill so that these types of things and the practical impacts on the community can be totally threshed out. None of us . . . I'm going to reiterate it. None of us want to see anyone discriminated against. We just want to make sure that all our i's are dotted, and all our t's are crossed as best as we can to ensure the best thing for the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

Mr. Scott Pearman: He's taller. He's taller, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the last speaker on this side for her insightful remarks.

Mr. Speaker, in another life I was a human rights lawyer in London for 13 years. And every day I would go to court, and I would participate in discrimination claims. So, this is something that I have focused a lot of my life on and something I'm very passionate about. And I commend the particular Minister in relation to this Bill because I know on previous occasions in this House she has brought forward legislation in this area. And I also know that she takes the issue of disability close to her heart.

What disability discrimination is about is protecting certain individuals because they possess a protected characteristic. Now, that's a boring legal term, "protected characteristic." What does that really mean? It means someone's race, someone's gender, someone's disability. It now, and lately in the last decade or so, has come to mean someone's age. And I'll come back to age at the end of my remarks.

When anti-discrimination laws came into effect in the UK decades ago, the focus was initially on the

concept of less favourable treatment. You should not treat someone less favourably than you treat another person, if that someone is a woman and that other person is a man, or that someone is Brown and the other person is Black, et cetera. So, the law quite rightly intervened to prohibit and make illegal less favourable treatment. And that is what is at the heart of discrimination.

Over time, the law expanded beyond less favourable treatment, which was primarily looked at in the workplace, to other areas, such as the provision of facilities, the provision of goods, the provision of services. And just to be very clear, because what this Bill, in essence, is seeking to do today is to introduce a new category of discrimination. A new category of "discrimination by association."

And my colleague, Robin Tucker, MP, pointed out that that is not at present understood to be defined, or at least there's no definition in this Bill or in the primary Act. It may be just defined somewhere else. But the absence of that definition is an extremely concerning factor. And for me, it's one that causes me to say, *Hey, let's just think again. Take a pause, maybe come back on the first sitting in September and deal with it so people know exactly what "discrimination by association" means.*

What this Bill is also seeking to do in that context of discrimination by association is to recognise that those with criminal records will be able to bring claims for discrimination. It will also put in age. And it's also introducing a relatively novel concept, although there are certain jurisdictions that look at source of income as a concept, such as Canada. It's adding something called "receipt of government funding." That is not limited to financial aid. That extends to include those who receive government funding in relation to child care, child schooling support. I believe it's child day care allowance. And so that's the context that we're in.

We're also looking, as the Minister said in her brief, at this issue of the dwindling housing market in Bermuda, and whether and how a government can compel people to make more accessible their . . . I'll use granny flat. I don't mean that in a disrespectful way, but the little flat that may have been built on the property next to granny's house. How can we make sure that those are available in the market where a number of young Bermudians are unable to find housing? And so, this is the Government's response to this.

And I pause there to note that it is unusual, given [in] the Landlord and Tenant Bill that the PLP is bringing forward, [which] has been heralded, that this is not being dealt with in that context as one would expect. Where you look at the rights of tenants and you look at the rights of landlords, you seek to find a balance that is fair for all, as best as possible. And that might then look at how one might legitimately and fairly compel a landlord, granny, to rent out her granny flat and to whom. So, it is slightly unusual that this is being placed in the context of our anti-discrimination legislation.

So, one of the things you want to know when you're dealing with discrimination law, most in the Chamber will already be aware that our discrimination law is contained within our Human Rights Act 1981. The real significance of that Act is that it has the ability to supersede all other legislation.

I see the Speaker nodding his head. He's familiar with that from prior debates.

But it has the ability, effectively, to override every other law that we have on our books in this Island. And given that it has the ability to override all the other laws that we have on our books in this Island, and I put this in a perfectly proper and respectable way, can the Minister ensure the Bermudian public and this Honourable House that she has done all the necessary homework on this and looked at the impacts of this legislative change in relation to those in receipt of government funding and those with criminal records and also age, and the concept of discrimination by association and the impacts it will have on other statutory legislation?

I know that others from other places have already raised with the Minister certain concerns, particularly in relation to the aspect of criminal records. And if criminal records are going to be something that can trump under this Act, and I appreciate criminal records appear elsewhere in the legislation, what is the knock-on effect for that? Will this be an ability for the HRA, the Human Rights Act, which, as I said, is an anti-discrimination Bill on steroids which supersedes other laws, to effectively wreak havoc on other existing laws? And if the Minister stands up and gives the assurance to this House, *Well, actually, that's been done, and we've looked at this, that, or the other*, then obviously one might take comfort in that.

But I do know that those who have raised matters with the Minister, and have copied in Members of this side, have raised some perfectly legitimate questions over what rights might be inadvertently given to those with criminal records in legislation where this Parliament has properly decided that those with criminal records should not have additional rights, or should not be able to override those rights. The example given was whether or not those in prison who are not currently entitled to pensions could then run an argument that that should override that. That was one of the examples given. But, I mean, really, here we are in the realm of unintended consequences.

And, again, like my colleague, [MP] Robin Tucker, we're not opposing this Bill. We are simply inviting the Government to pause for a minute, to rise and report [progress], and to come back in the sitting in September, making sure that that necessary homework is done.

And I will now address a few further matters that we would invite the Government to consider. And I remind ourselves, of course, that the road to hell is paved with good intentions. This is certainly well-intentioned. And I recognise that. And it is right and proper,

in my opinion, my personal opinion, to recognise that someone who has done his or her time in incarceration and has served their time and has come out, deserves a clean slate. And I have absolutely no problem with that concept.

I also can see why it would be better to compel or to invite landlords to have an open heart and rent to everyone, no matter whether they may be on financial assistance or not. But one can actually see the response one might get from a landlord. *Well, what if I'm not getting paid?* So, you know, these are fair points, and it's something we would invite the Government to think about. Because I think that when Bermudians realise that the flat next to granny might have someone in it that granny does not want, or that granny feels might not pay the rent, you know, I think that does raise a few questions that are deserving of answers.

And that's probably an appropriate point to just point to the Minister's intervention, which is when she stood up during MP Tucker's presentation to this Honourable House, where she said: *Well, the landlord has a right to choose.*

Now, it is correct in the case of someone with a criminal record that currently the law does provide for a caveat for that. What's not clear is any caveat that may or may not exist in relation to those in receipt of government funding. At present, there is no caveat. And it's something that the Government may wish to consider or, indeed, may have thought was included in this Bill. Because if it is in the Bill, I can't find it. And maybe I'm wrong. Maybe it's there. And maybe the Government . . . the Minister's point will be made good in a moment.

Mr. Speaker, just a few more brief points. Then there's the overarching sort of philosophical point. And that takes us back to why in anti-discrimination legislation you have protected characteristics. The most obvious, you know, race, gender, disability, the Minister listed a whole number. It's often said that those are rightly protected characteristics because they are traits that you are born with, or that you acquire, or are a fundamental core belief. Right? And so, when you are legislating in this area one of the things one does need to be careful about is just being too broad in what we presume to be a protected characteristic. The speaker before me has red hair. We don't want everyone with red hair to have the right to break discrimination claims.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Especially from St. George's.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Especially not from St. George's.

I'm looking at one of the Members of the Government's support team here who's wearing glasses, as I do. You know, we wouldn't want that to be a protected characteristic. And I think it is something about which multiple reasonable people could have a legitimate discussion. And I see the Deputy Leader of the Government's now got glasses on. But I think it's

something that multiple people could have a reasonable discussion on whether or not the receipt of government funding is properly a protected characteristic. I have my own personal view, which is probably not to the point. But I see that people could have a reasonable disagreement about that and what it would land on.

I said I'd come back to age, Mr. Speaker. I have actually spoken about this before. Age is being added in relation to discrimination by association. Age is actually a really, really tricky area of disability discrimination law. When I was a student, I studied under a man called Simon Cheetham. He's now King's Counsel in London. He actually wrote the book on age discrimination. And then indeed wrote the ultimate Act on age discrimination.

When we think about age discrimination, we think about mistreating those who are old, those who are elderly. Age discrimination is far more than that. Age discrimination prohibits discrimination on the basis of anyone's age. So, you could discriminate against someone who is young. And one example of unintended consequences was a company called Saga Holidays, who used to . . . I'll pause while the Premier looks at his phone.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Saga Holidays, which used to take . . . that's a great picture.

Hon. E. David Burt: I know. Thank you for the compliment.

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's a nice selfie.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: There was a company called Saga Holidays. And Saga Holidays, their business was to have cruises, but only for those of a certain age, beyond a certain age. And they were sued. They were sued by someone in their 20s who said it was discriminatory not to be able to go on a Saga Holidays cruise.

So, I raise that slightly tongue-in-cheek just to point out that there are unintended consequences when you make changes like this. And, therefore, I do look for an assurance from the Minister either that all the homework has properly been done on this, or if possibly it hasn't, that she will rise and report [progress] and bring this back in September, but just to allow people to have a closer look at it, hopefully to really drill down on the definition of "disability by association."

There are a couple other points I'm going to raise in Committee if we get there, which I'm sure we will because you have the votes, which I also think are just not drafted—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'll be optimistic. Well, maybe we won't. But there are some drafting points that I think require clarity or clarification.

And so, Mr. Speaker, our conclusion is that no matter how well-intentioned this Bill may be, because of the matters that have been raised both by MP Tucker and myself, it would be more sensible just to rise and report [progress] on this one and make sure that we have our t's crossed and i's dotted and come back in September on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.] Hayward.

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, sir.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I would have thought from today we would have looked at this Bill from a lens where Bermuda is taking a step in the right direction. We have to ask ourselves whether or not because one is on financial assistance they should be denied housing in Bermuda. And the examples often give the scenario where granny is making a choice on who she's renting to. But based on the data, the majority of persons on financial assistance are seniors. The vast majority of individuals on financial assistance are seniors. Should our seniors be denied housing because they are on financial assistance? I think we will collectively say: *No, they shouldn't*. And as a result of that, we should do something about it.

The speaker before me spoke about people born into a circumstance. Children are born into socioeconomic conditions. Should a child be denied the right to go to a day care centre which may be in their neighbourhood, or close to their parents' job, on the basis of the way in which the parent is funding that particular child is through a government-assisted programme? The answer is, no; they shouldn't.

And we actually see where a Minister has taken a bold step—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: —to ensure that that does not continue. And that should be supported.

The points raised regarding unintended consequences are noted. We can always, if an issue is identified, come to this House and make the necessary amendments. But should we continue with the culture of discrimination in our community? No, we shouldn't. And we should be making progressive steps to move in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, we live in a society where a large portion of Bermudians already feel marginalised. It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that we have a more inclusive society. I think the Minister has viewed this from the lens of looking at what other jurisdictions

have done. And we have actually followed with the model that is actually present in other jurisdictions. Because those legislators in those countries understood that it was a challenge [they] made the necessary corrective steps. And we're doing so as well.

So, Mr. Speaker, I commend the Minister for bringing this Bill. We should continue to see our Human Rights Act evolve. These steps are part of that evolution. And we should do all that we possibly can to reduce discrimination in our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Is there any other Member . . . Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that we point out that I think we are actually really close on our position of there shouldn't be discrimination. I agree with the Minister who just took his seat. I agree with almost everything that he said. The issue that we're trying to point out . . . and I think the Minister of Housing would agree with this [is that] there are a lot of issues in our community where people have stopped renting. And they have stopped renting for a lot of reasons. But one of them is that there is this perception that certain people are not paying. Whether it's realistic or not, because we're in such a small community, that's what continues to happen.

So, when we're talking about unintended consequences, what we don't want to have happen is for people to see that this is more risky for them to potentially find themselves being challenged because they made a certain decision. And now more people are deciding not to rent. And I think we do have an issue in Bermuda where people who have apartments in many cases have stopped renting them out. And in some cases, they've moved to Airbnb. And they are choosing it for all kinds of reasons why they are not renting to people. Which is making the housing crisis for us worse.

What we want . . . and I think sometimes when we get to our feet we are actually really close on a subject. But we are just on opposite sides on certain specific points. And what we don't want is for anybody to think that we are not supportive of making sure that we are protecting people and not having discrimination. But the reality is that people are already making these decisions for specific reasons.

We have heard in this Chamber recently that landlords are deciding not to rent to certain prison officers because they don't want to have any of the retaliation that potentially is going to happen because of the gang situation that we're having in our country.

And a lot of our seniors who do have rental units, that they do have the ability because they were able to get a home at some point in Bermuda when it was affordable, a lot of them are living off of those rents.

That's the reality that we have, because it's difficult to live in Bermuda because of the cost. So, for many of them, they have to make very specific decisions on who they rent to. Because, yes, we would love to think that every person who rents an apartment is going to treat that apartment a certain way. And they are going to pay the rent that is expected. And that's, I think, where we all sit.

What we don't want is for people to feel that if they have made a decision based off . . . and I'll point out . . . the Minister actually pointed out something that I thought was important. This is just him and me talking across the floor. And he said that an employer shouldn't discriminate against somebody who they're going to hire. But they also have the ability to choose who they can hire. Correct?

I don't think what we're saying is that this person is not going to have the ability to choose. But what now they're feeling is there is a risk that if they've made a choice for a legitimate reason it now opens this door for them to be put in hot water because we've added these other restrictions. Even if it's not true, it's the problem with the perception we have in the country. We don't want to have a situation where we are now having any of the landlords who are already renting starting to think this is just another reason why they shouldn't rent.

So that is the reason why we were saying if the Landlord Tenant Act was put forward with all of these provisions to make sure we're not discriminating at the same time, I think it would settle this rather than it be this piece has come forward and we haven't seen the Landlord Tenant Act, which we believe from what we've heard from the Minister is going to balance some of those issues that are causing people not to rent presently.

So, I want to make sure that we are not in a situation where people think that we are not in support of those people who need financial assistance. And the Minister pointed it out. A significant number of those are our seniors who find, in the market that we have now, it is very difficult to find affordable housing. We understand that this is a crisis that all of us want to get a result of.

What we do not want is that an unintended consequence of making this decision without having the provisions of a Landlord Tenant Act change could maybe have some more people decide not to put their houses on the market.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

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

Any other?

Minister, would you like to take the floor? Oh, oh. Oh, sorry, Minister of Home Affairs.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence.

I do want to just quickly rise and provide a contribution and support for the Bill that is tabled, not only accepting its connectivity and ability to remove what this Government was both elected and it is expected of us to do, and that is to remove what are barriers to access. This administration would have campaigned on the Two Bermudas, and our inability or added ability through this legislation is only what is value-added in the context of a wider government strategy.

[That] is the strategy that includes the landlord and tenant reform, which we have spoken about in this House, and we have been thoughtful and consulted the various stakeholders and realtor community to ensure that when we do finalise what are the legislative amendments and the policy that would support and underpin its operations, it has been thoughtfully considered.

It is a journey, and it has taken some time. But what I also knew is that persons who are receiving financial assistance or are receiving government support are often looked at as problematic, or there will be a level of resistance to provide them services. In addition to the landlord and tenant provisions that the Ministry is thoughtfully stewarding, and the provisions included in this legislation that serve two but a connected purpose, it does not equate to actually an erosion and/or preclude us from evolving and moving forward.

And so, I celebrate the work of the Minister and her team to be able to rip down the barriers that create systematic access injustices. I often think of, and particularly today I'm rising on my feet because of a candidate's constituent's feedback about how a day care facility was not willing to accept their . . . uptick . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —or what they had taken—application. (Thank you, Minister) The application, due to the fact that they were receiving government funding.

So, while the Government is seeking to do its part to provide access to provide relief for families to provide and remove the barriers and the Two Bermudas and to create greater connectivity and access, there are other things that could help to further strengthen and also establish a standard for which we in Bermuda are operating and can be known to be associated with.

When I see laws and when I am influenced by rules, rules also underpin a community's ethos. It's rules also define how we will and will not engage with one another. And I think that a provision that removes discrimination in the way that we engage with someone, engage, accept, et cetera, is good. And so, I do hear the Honourable Member's contribution today in providing resistance, but I think change is good.

And we are seeking to be laser-focused on how we want to provide for the people that we've been elected to serve. They have asked for us to remove these challenges. And so, in response to what they

would have shared with the Government, shared with the ministries, shared with the technical teams, where there are barriers to access, the answer must be we will find a way to remove those barriers. And so, I commend again, the Minister and the team to bring this thoughtful piece of legislation forward. And I just wanted to provide those brief contributions and support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Premier . . . Ah . . . Opposition Whip.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I'll attempt to be brief. And I actually appreciate all of the comments that have been made on this particular Bill that we are doing.

I believe that the sensitivity around this is important, that, yes, we move with some progressive thought in mind. There are always things to add to a Bill as we move through time. What we are attempting to do here is hoping that we can clear up some of the challenges and issues that are being brought forward so that it can be brought back before the House in September. Because we do agree on premise with this particular Bill. What we are concerned about is making sure that we don't miss anything out.

I do not believe, essentially, that a Landlord Tenant Bill will be brought to the House before September. We'll be on break, and we probably will only have two [sittings] in September. And so, we don't see any harm in the fact that, well, maybe we can clear out a few things, one or two items that will be important to everyone Island-wide, Bermuda-wide, just by rising to report [progress] and to bring it back, so that we've gotten that done.

I get the premise, *Okay, well, you know, we don't want to hold up because someone is complaining about it.* And people are complaining about the challenges of discrimination when it comes to the Landlord and Tenant Act. But what we are doing, frankly, is we haven't done much on the landlord tenant situation. And the landlords of Bermuda are speaking very loudly by not making their places available. So, let's get that in place.

And at the same time (get that in place) we can also, by September, get in place some of the concerns that we have. Hash those out, even during the time that we're out of session, so that when we come back in September, it's done. That's quick timing. But just to say that, okay, and the thought of progress, just to progress, we don't know when these issues will be handled. And quite frankly, sometimes amendments are

made quickly, and sometimes amendments take one or two years to come forward.

And so that's really just the premise that we're standing on, so that we are all clear on where we stand with this. And that landlords themselves . . . quite frankly, the majority of landlords are probably Black middle class in Bermuda. And probably the same for those who are on financial assistance are seniors. And so, we want to be fair to both, to ensure that . . . because I think one of the consequences is: *Well, they may not be renting it out.* But then the next challenge is they sell it. And sell it to who? The house. Because we're out of here. You know what I mean?

And that's something that we're sensitive to. And we are attempting to find a balance so that people are not basically saying: *Well, you know, what's the sense in owning a home in Bermuda when I have no say, quite frankly?* And now we're putting a further burden on the landlord, which happens to be us, right? So, I take it in . . . in . . . and we take it in stride as to what the Government wants to do. But that's really our concern.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Before I recognise anyone else, I just want to recognise the Attorney General in the Gallery, and Senator Fubler.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: And also see the President of the College, Dr. Sam. Nice to see you, Sam. Good to see you here. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

[Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, second reading debate, continuing]

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

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

The Speaker: Sure.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Nice to be off the naughty step and back in the House.

The Speaker: It's a good place to be.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, it is.

Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to mention a few things in support of this Bill. Let me make it clear, the Landlord and Tenant Act, the Premier made it very clear during the last election that this was going to be one of the things that we deal with, and we will deal with as soon as possible. And I know that there is a lot of work [that has] been done in that space already, and it's well underway. And many Members, maybe on both sides, know that this is taking place. And so that will come.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to just emphasise that housing is a human right. And it should be emphasised as a human right. The Honourable Member who just took his seat, Mr. Cannonier, said that this is going to be a burden on the landlord. What about the burden on our people who are looking for housing and are being discriminated against?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What about that?

So, what I'm saying is, Mr. Speaker, is that—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Minister is unintentionally misleading the House. I did speak on behalf of both, that we want to be fair to both. My exact words were: We want to be balanced with both. Because we know the concern. It was not one-sided.

The Speaker: You did say balanced, yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, that's fine to say, you know, balanced. But right now, we have an imbalance. And it's not . . . The imbalance is not in favour of the landlord. The imbalance is in favour of the tenant, or that person who is looking for housing who is being discriminated against.

And whilst the Opposition may get on their feet and say: *Listen, it's only a couple of things. We can get it sorted out during the summer, and we'll deal with it in September*, in the meantime—and I know better than most—there are many people in this country who are not getting housing. And we all know in this House, there are many people who are not getting housing because people who own those apartments and houses will not rent to a certain segment. And every month that goes by another person is discriminated against. So, our view is that, listen: *Thank you, Minister, for being bold and bringing this forward today*. Because we're a couple of months closer to stopping discrimination.

So, Mr. Speaker, we must, in this House, always keep in mind that when we bring legislation here,

we won't always have everything covered 100 per cent. The fact of the matter is that we, as a Government, will bring things that will effect change for our people. Not saying that we are going to get it all correct and cover everything in one fell swoop. We won't. Neither will the other governments that come in years to come, maybe, if they get that luxury. But the fact of the matter is that we will make changes as quickly as we can. Sometimes we'll make changes that have to come back over and over. If you look at some of the legislation we have, if you look at the history of it, we've made a raft of changes throughout the decades. And we'll continue to do so.

And we may find from our own experiences that this legislation may need tweaking come forward sometime in the future because we are a caring Government and the people of this country know our record speaks for itself. The Premier gave us a nice 25-minute presentation this morning about what we're doing for the people of this country. This is another one of those.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we'll talk about that later.

The Speaker: Motion to adjourn.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, we will talk about that later, Mr. Speaker. I hope that there will be more people that think of our seniors that way.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But Mr. Speaker, I would just like to thank the Minister for bringing this. Do not be afraid to bring changes to this place that benefit our people. Never. If we have 100 items on the agenda and you can get 50 through, bring them here and pass them. We'll get the other 50 later.

So, thank you, Minister. Thank you. And the people of this country will appreciate you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I just think that it's important to note that the Human Rights Commission, of course, is formed on a bipartisan basis. The recommendations on matters that are from here are coming from the Human Rights Commission, save and except for the items that are referring to discrimination [on] the source of funding

[from] government, which I think we should all accept is something that we can support. And so, I hope that we would recognise and remember and understand that we do have a process for these things. These are coming recommendations. We have an entire Act that governs how this process works. And I think it's important that those things are kept in mind, that it is not just a matter related to the Government.

The Ministers had the courage to bring these things and to make sure to do the work to address these things. But it's important to recognise there is a process. And I sincerely hope that the Opposition would understand, recognise, and understand that that is the process being followed. And we're trying to make sure we get these things right and proper because the recommendations are made, because the Human Rights Commission considers that there is a need to do these particular changes because of the complaints and challenges that are coming to them for the people whom we represent.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None?

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I do want to start by thanking all of the Honourable Members in this House for their comments as it relates to the debate on this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, when bringing this Bill forward, we no doubt [thought] about everyday people. Mr. Speaker, if you allow me, there's a [letter to the editor](#) that I'd like to make reference to from a person who is an everyday person. And Mr. Speaker, that person says: "[And] landlords? They are free to discriminate without consequence. Tenants are rejected for having children, being unmarried, living with adult relatives, or simply not fitting a landlord's personal 'vibe.' Discrimination based on family structure, race, age, or gender is widespread." (And this person felt it was) "entirely unregulated. No one is checking. No one is enforcing."

Mr. Speaker, with this Bill, we are. And the Human Rights Bill in general, is to try to reduce discrimination overall. It's also to create access to people based on the grounds.

And I believe bringing this Bill today, Mr. Speaker, is a balanced approach. We have a housing crisis, Mr. Speaker. The section that we are [discussing] . . . one of the sections that we were looking to repeal, Mr. Speaker, speaks to discrimination on a particular type of accommodation. This actually, Mr. Speaker, was put in this Bill back in 1981. And we can all imagine what we were experiencing back in 1981. Racial tensions were ripe. And so, this insertion, I could

imagine, was there to try to discriminate against persons of colour.

Mr. Speaker, we are not there. We have grown, Mr. Speaker. We have grown. There have been many changes throughout the life of the Human Rights Act in which we are taking a policy stand to reduce discrimination. The Human Rights Commission does an excellent job of providing education in our community to anyone. Anyone who calls into the office for a complaint or an intake, it is the Human Rights Commission's role to provide information and to educate so that persons can go away and may have an informed decision. And we're thankful for the work that the Human Rights Commission does. That is one of their responsibilities. It is one of their duties, to educate the public as it relates to their rights, the discrimination rights.

Mr. Speaker, when we speak about financial assistance clients with the source of income and landlords potentially not accepting persons who benefit from financial assistance or the child day care allowance because they feel like they may not get paid, this is not a human rights issue. It's maybe an operation or process issue, Mr. Speaker. And so, Mr. Speaker, we have to decide who we want to protect in this country. Granny, we want to protect Granny. Particularly the Granny who is on financial assistance and is in need of housing.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Every day I get calls from seniors—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Talk about it.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —saying they can't afford this amount and that amount. They are looking for somewhere to stay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, Tinee. Give it to them. Give it to them.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: But they are on financial assistance.

Hon. E. David Burt: Give it to them.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: My colleague to my side has already mentioned that the majority of persons who are on financial assistance are our grannies and grandpas, our older adults, our seniors. And so, we are hoping to provide a broader protection for them, particularly when it comes to housing.

¹ *The Royal Gazette*, 28 October 2025

When we talk about persons with criminal records, Mr. Speaker, there is a carve out in the Human Rights Act that speaks to persons with criminal records being a protected ground. Where there is an exception, particularly for those persons in which there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which that person is convicted, that would justify a difference in treatment. And so that is already a carve out in the Human Rights Act. That if someone came to the Human Rights Office that there is still some protection for our landlords, for our businessowners who have goods and services that will give the human rights direction on how they should proceed.

The Human Rights Commission has also stated that they will write guidelines as it relates to family status, discrimination by association, which will help to guide the tribunals or their decisions going forward. I think that's fair, Mr. Speaker. To insert a specific definition into the Human Rights Act would be a limiting approach. And we need to be able to give leverage because there are so many different circumstances. We'll be changing it every year, every six months. And so, the Human Rights Commission has committed to making sure that these guidelines are in place. And I'm sure if the public is listening, if there is something that they want for consideration, the Human Rights is that body to which they can write and have consideration.

Mr. Speaker, persons purchase properties for many reasons. For those who have apartments, they do for family members. They'll have apartments for investment reasons. Our seniors, who are actually the majority of persons who actually own their own homes, also do it for income so that they can have income when they no longer are working or they're retired. But people may stop renting their apartments for many reasons. Many reasons, because maybe previous persons in their apartments destroyed their property, or they stopped paying rent and they are in arrears, or they just don't need the money. So, there are many different factors separate and apart from the protected grounds of why someone would choose to not rent their apartment.

And we'll follow this, Mr. Speaker. We'll follow this. The Minister of Human Affairs, and other Members in this House, spoke about how we are progressing the Landlord and Tenant Act, which will give us greater provision to follow these sorts of circumstances.

We're taking a stand today, Mr. Speaker. Housing is a human right. Our people have called for changes, for direction, and we want to limit the erosion of our right to housing so that our persons can have better access to the things that they need.

And I will end on that point, Mr. Speaker. Discrimination in all forms, Mr. Speaker, is just unlawful. And we are taking steps today, which I spoke about in my brief, that this is a phased approach because more changes will be coming. This is just a few of them, particularly to make sure that we are helping our people as we go through this housing crisis to provide some better protection for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.
Would you like to . . . oh.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: We are moving the motion.

Mr. Scott Pearman: We're going to Committee?

The Speaker: Yes, we're going to Committee. You can move the motion—

Mr. Scott Pearman: And we'll move motion, yes.

The Speaker: Yes.
You need to move us into Committee, Minister.
Move us to Committee. Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Any . . . you would like us to, you want to . . .

Mr. Scott Pearman: Move a motion that we rise and report.

The Speaker: Yes, but before—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: We haven't even got into Committee yet. We're moving the motion at this point.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Yes, yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, we can.

The Speaker: Wait, wait. Wait, wait.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Yes, yes. What I was about to say is are there any objections to going into Committee?

You can object to, but if you want to move the motion, you should move your motion when we get into Committee.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Fine.

The Speaker: Okay?

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's fine.

The Speaker: Okay. So, we'll move . . . we are moving it to Committee. The . . . Deputy?

Okay. And in Committee, you can put forward your amendment, the motion, whichever you wish.

Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 4:23 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Human Rights Amendment Act 2026](#). I call on the Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Human Rights Act of 1981, the principal Act, on the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission.

The Chairman: Minister, would you like to move that we take this under consideration now? And you might want to indicate which clauses, if you want to do them in sections, or if you want to do all the clauses.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, thank you. I would like to move clauses 1 through 6.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clauses 1 through 6, inclusively.

Are there any objections?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Madam Chairman, we move . . . I'll spare your voice on this one if people are with us, but we move that we rise and report [progress] on this Bill.

The Chairman: Members, it has been moved and suggested that we rise and report progress.

Are there any objections?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

The Chairman: I think . . . it doesn't have to go to—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Yes.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: This . . . that motion did not carry, so we will continue.

It has been moved that we consider clauses 1 through 6. Are there any Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I'm conscious that we have lots to do today and this evening, so shall I put all four questions that I have all at once, yes?

The Chairman: You may, because we're considering all six clauses.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Perfect. Thank you so much.

So, my first question to the Honourable Minister is—

Hon. Jason Hayward: Point of order.

The Chairman: Sure. Minister, go ahead. Your point of order.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Should the Minister not go through the clauses first?

The Chairman: Oh, yes. Yes, you are 100 per cent correct, Minister, . . . and that is . . . the Minister needs to read all six clauses. Thank you.

I think the Minister was hoping that she could get by not doing—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Trying to save my voice, trying to save your voice.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1, Madam Chairman, gives the title.

Clause 2 amends section 2(1) of the principal Act (interpretation). The definition of "class of persons" is extended to include persons with a criminal record. "Government funding" is defined to mean the specified financial assistance awards or child day care allowance. Receipt of government funding is inserted as an additional prohibited ground of discrimination in sections 4 and 5.

Clause 3 inserts new section 2A into the principal Act (discrimination by association). Subsection (1) prohibits discrimination against a person because of a protected characteristic relating to a person or class of persons associated with that person. Subsection (2) defines "protected characteristic" as meaning the criteria listed in section 2(2)(a)(i) to (vii). And in relation to discrimination prescribed by section 4 or 5, includes age or receipt of government funding.

Clause 4, Madam Chairman, amends section 4(1) of the principal Act (discrimination in disposal of premises) to include receipt of government funding as

a prohibited ground of discrimination for this section. The deletion of subsection (4)(a) removes an exception from discrimination that currently applies in the case of the letting of a housing unit in a building which contains accommodation for two or three families living independently if the owner or members of his family occupy one of the units.

Clause 5 amends section [5](1) of the principal Act (provision of goods, facilities and services) to include receipt of government funding as a prohibited ground of discrimination for this section. New subsection (6) provides that requiring a level of income to qualify for the provision of a facility for banking, insurance, grants, loans, credit or finance which is not satisfied by a person who is in receipt of government [funding] is not taken to be discriminatory.

Clause 6 provides for commencement.

Madam Chairman, I would like to move all clauses, 1 through 6, to be approved.

The Chairman: To be considered. Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: To be considered.

The Chairman: Yes.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

I recognise the Member from constituency 22.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you very much and per your prior indication I'll move all four questions at the same time for the benefit of the Minister and your voice.

Two of these questions have been shared with the Minister in advance. They're technical questions on the drafting, and then two are general questions.

The first question is in relation to clause 2 which amends section 2 of the primary Act and it's in relation to [section] 2[(1)](a) in the definition of "class of persons" delete "sub-paragraphs (i) to (vi)" and substitute "sub-paragraphs (i) to (vii)". And the question is . . . and (vii) by the way, for the benefit of the listening public, is the section that makes criminal record a discriminatory characteristic or a protected characteristic rather. Just . . . could the Minister clarify whether this is just a typographical correction or whether there is an underlying reason why that is being put into the definition of "class of persons"? So that's the first question.

The second question of four relates to clause 3, down to the bottom of page 1. This was something actually the Minister dealt with in her response. But it's: Is there in fact a definition of "discrimination by association"? I think the Minister said no there is not, and you didn't want one. But it may be that it's clarified.

My third question is over the page and that is in relation to . . . well, it's still in clause 3, but it's the second page that deals with clause 3. And that is the fact that age is now being inserted into discrimination by association. And I just invite the Minister to give a practical example of how that's going to work. How is

age in the context of discrimination by association going to work?

And then finally and lastly, my fourth question is in relation to receipt of government funding, which is clause 3, inserting a new 2A. And it's 2A(2)(b) where the receipt of government funding is now being inserted as a new language.

The Minister spoke in the debate and indeed commended the fact that where a criminal record is provided as a discriminatory protected characteristic there is in fact a caveat that follows. And the Minister referred to it in her in her brief, which says, *except where there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which he's convicted that would justify the difference in treatment*. That phraseology is what's known as a justification defence. It means someone accused of discrimination can justify why they acted as they did.

I would simply add, would the Minister perhaps take under advisement whether it would be sensible to add a justification defence to receipt of government funding? One could envisage a situation where a nice landlord gives a premises to someone on government funding. But subsequently, a month or two or three or even a year and a half later, is not paid, terminates that lease, and then is accused of discrimination in circumstances where that landlord actually tried to do the honourable thing. Should that landlord not have a legitimate defence, where they can justify their actions for other reasons be a good inclusion? And it's in relation to something that already exists in the law for criminal record. Why not add it in in the Senate for government funding? Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

There being none, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, as previously mentioned, the right to housing has been codified by a wide range of international legal instruments under the umbrella of the United Nations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR] reported that 1.8 billion people worldwide lacked adequate housing. And discrimination in housing is one of the most pervasive and persistent barriers to fulfilment of the right to adequate housing. The exception set out within section 4(4)(a) of the Human Rights Act [1981] is frustrating the right to adequate housing at a time where members of our community are experiencing difficulties securing housing, periods of being unhoused, or periods of being inadequately housed. Discrimination based on association with a person because of that person's age in the same way it would be because of that person's

race, sex or religion. There's no difference in the ground, Madam Chairman.

As it relates to discrimination by association, with the policy in the addition of criminal record, criminal record has been a ground in the Human Rights Act for a number of years now. But discrimination of a person with a criminal record should be included in the amendment as unlawful. Previously it was stated in the Human Rights Act [1981] [in] section 2(2)(a) . . . it had only gone up to (i) to (vi) [*sic*] and Council had advised that that needed to be changed to include the grounds of (vii).

I do want to take the opportunity to speak of some examples of discrimination by association:

- An individual who worked at a restaurant and was terminated when their employer and customers learned that their boyfriend was HIV positive.
- An individual who was expelled from a membership club for speaking out internally against racism that they observed within the organisation. They were expelled and discriminated against because they associated themselves with individuals subjected to racism who were Aboriginal and Black.
- A situation where a restaurant harassed and refused to serve an Asian customer because they are accompanied by someone who is Black. Or refusing to provide a service to someone who is White because they have attended with someone who is Black (or you can use age in that example).
- Another scenario could be someone who is denied an employment opportunity because of the political opinions of an individual with which they associate, for example, a friend.

Madam Chairman, I do want to speak to the drafting process in the Attorney General's Chambers which includes an analysis, Madam Chairman, of all the pieces of legislation as it relates to the Human Rights Act and its impact, and whether there are contemplated changes, or adequately dealt with, or conflicting with other pieces of legislation. And that was definitely done.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

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

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you.

I think the Honourable Minister addressed my first three questions, but not the fourth one, which is whether or not the Minister considers the justification defence would be appropriate in relation to receipt of government funding. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

There being none, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, I don't . . . I'm not understanding the question. If you can be a little bit more—

The Chairman: Sure.

Member, can you rephrase the question, please?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Of course. Of course, Madam Chairman. Of course, Minister.

The question was that the Minister in her brief had referred to the Human Rights Act and to the fact that someone who has a protected characteristic of being . . . of having a criminal record, that there was a defence available in a discrimination claim, which says, except where there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which he's convicted that would justify the difference in treatment.

Just to give a practical example of that: If you're a convicted child sex offender and you apply to work at a nursery school, and the nursery school says: *Over my dead body*. You can't sue the nursery school for discrimination. So, that's why those defences exist.

The Chairman: Right.

Mr. Scott Pearman: They are sort of, you know, practical defences.

And the question I posed to the Minister was, given her commendation in relation to that clause and how it works (and she used it in the example of housing), would the Minister consider it sensible to include that with the receipt of finances?

And the example I gave there was someone who was initially given a tenancy but then stopped paying. And if they sue for discrimination because they've stopped paying, and that's why it comes to an end, you know, would the Minister consider a justification defence? Thank you.

[*Inaudible interjections*]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you for those questions.

The Bill, Madam Chairman, only speaks to receipt of government funding. Right? Receipt. So, if I . . . if I am going to rent a place and I say that I'm a recipient of financial assistance, that's what it speaks to. Receipts.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: As far as defence or putting a qualifier or defence into the Act, the example that was given was in regard to sexual offenders. There are

protections that we have in other legislation that will protect an employer from hiring persons with certain criminal activity or past. Such as, I believe, the Child Day Care Regulations, you know, and also there's legislation within the Children Act that says that anyone who is going to work for a child day care facility has to have a criminal record check, as well as a check for child abuse. So, there are checks and balances throughout different legislation that we don't feel the need that we would have to put a defence clause in the Human Rights Act.

But I just wanted to clarify that the Act, as it relates to government funding, is just that of receipt of government funding.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

I recognise the Member from constituency 17. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Yes. I just want to highlight the instance that the Honourable Member brought to the floor with this scenario regarding an individual who may be on financial assistance who has gained access to a house and then is later, due to lack of payment, asked . . . or to be . . . or the process starts for eviction. But that would be based off of breach of contract and/or breach of the lease. The inability to pay the lease. It has nothing to do with the discriminatory grounds. And so the contract still remains and the tenant still needs to live up to the expectations of the lease or the contract that they engaged in with the landowner.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry. I was going to leave it there but let me just give a practical example.

So, the landlord takes on board someone on financial assistance as a tenant because he is a good landlord and is someone who believes in helping people who are on financial assistance. Nonetheless . . . and let's call it a one-year lease. Because leases don't often, you know, it could be a three-month lease, break clause. It could be six months; it could be a year. But let's call it a year for example. If after three months or even five months there's no payment being made, the landlord might say: *Well, I'm actually terminating this person because they're not paying me.* But the discrimination as drafted doesn't afford the same reasonable defence that is afforded in the sex offender list . . . or the sex . . . the criminal records bit that I read.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, I'll put it . . . Well, I'm sorry. I'll put it one more time because obviously we're at cross purposes.

Underneath the Human Rights Act there is what is known as a defence. It's a defence that's available to people accused of discrimination . . . for discriminating against those with criminal records. And I read the defence, but I'll read it one more time for completeness.

So, you cannot discriminate against someone with their criminal record. And then there's a defence, (*comma*) ²“except where there are valid reasons relevant to the nature of the particular offence for which he is convicted that it would justify the difference in treatment.”

An example I gave was of a child sex offender trying to work at a nursery school. And we all, I think, agree that that's a pretty good example. And that's why you have a defence.

Your Bill has no defence in relation to the person on receipt of government funds. And I'm just asking the Minister whether she thinks that perhaps there should be.

And I was trying to give an example of someone . . . where someone, under the kindness of their heart, took on someone into a tenancy, because they are a good person. But nonetheless the person on financial aid fell short on the payments. And if they terminated at that point, and they're accused of discrimination, the legislation that is drafted doesn't appear to offer them a defence. And maybe we should. That's my point.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

There being none, Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, if rent isn't paid then termination of tenancy is not on a discriminatory ground.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Okay. Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 6:

There being none, Minister, you can move . . . you can move your . . .

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would like to move all clauses, 1 through 6—

The Chairman: Approved.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —to be approved.

² Human Rights Act 1981, section 2(2)(a)(vii)

The Chairman: Okay.

It's been moved that clauses 1 through 6 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 6 passed.]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

An Hon. Member: No.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Chairman, I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 4:47 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

Are there any objections?

No objections.

Okay. The Bill has reported to the House as printed.

We will now move on to the next item, [Order] No. 3, which is the Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 in the name of the Minister, the Premier, the Minister of Finance.

Premier. Thank you, sir.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence I move that the Bill entitled the Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to the Bill being read a second time?

There are none.

Proceed

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

BILL

SECOND READING

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct honour and privilege on behalf of the Government to rise this morning . . . I'm sorry, this afternoon—

The Speaker: This afternoon. Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —to address this Honourable House and debate the Bill entitled the Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill proposes amendments to the Tax Credits Act 2025 to provide for the better administration [of] tax credits regime and to better facilitate the filing of tax credit claims. The Government finds there is a need to ensure that the administration of the tax credits regime operates within well-defined rules, criteria, and transparency.

By way of background, Mr. Speaker, the Tax Credits Act has been in force since December 2025, with effect from 1 December 2025. The Tax Credits Act establishes several qualified tax credits: a substance-based tax credit, a community development tax credit benefit, and a utilities infrastructure tax credit benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the Tax Credits Act provides tax credits to incentivise industries that are instrumental in the growth and development of the Bermuda economy to invest in their on-Island operations to encourage such investment that results in increased employment in Bermuda and increased job opportunities for Bermudians, to further encourage such investment where it results in increased expenditure on domestic goods and services thereby benefiting the wider local Bermuda economy. And lastly, to recognise and encourage charitable contributions, whereas the charitable contributions represent a meaningful contribution to the community.

Mr. Speaker, the Corporate Income Tax Agency held a public consultation of the proposed amendments to the Act in June 2026 which included an illustrative Bill. The feedback received during the consultation process has been thoroughly reviewed and thoughtfully considered and, where appropriate, revisions have been incorporated into legislation to

address the concerns and suggestions raised by stakeholders. This approach ensures the legislation is both practical in its application and reflective of the input of those whom it will affect.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments relate the following matters and are put forward for consideration:

- to provide a more accurate calculation number of eligible employees in regard for the calculation of tax credit benefits awarded under the substance-based tax credit;
- to provide greater clarity in the calculation of expense-based tax credit benefits; and
- to reduce administrative complexity where there are changes in a corporate group to ensure such changes do not impact the calculation of a group's tax credit benefits.

Mr. Speaker, further to these changes, consequential amendments are proposed the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 to ensure the legislation remains in line with the updated tax credit framework. The consequential amendment reflects the ordering of tax credit payments from the tax refund reserve fund before the consolidated fund for all tax credit recipients and not just recipients who are in the charge to corporate income tax.

Mr. Speaker, in closing I wish to emphasise that the Government remains confident that Bermuda's corporate tax framework upholds Bermuda's strong commitment to global compliance and transparency while maintaining the Island's respected reputation internationally. The progress achieved thus far was made possible through the invaluable contributions of the international tax working group, whose expertise and dedication continue to play a central role in advancing this important initiative.

I would also like to thank everyone in the Ministry of Finance and the Corporate Income Tax Agency, as we're joined by the CEO, along with our dedicated advisors for the time, effort and expertise they've contributed to this work. I also extend my appreciation to the drafting team of the Attorney General's Chambers for their support throughout this process.

Mr. Speaker, this concludes my comments and I sincerely hope that the Opposition will respond with "I support" and no buts.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: [Microphone not on.]

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

I think the Premier forgets that I don't actually sit in his Cabinet, so, you know—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, he may have to . . . I know he's used to bossing people around. But he's just going

to get used to . . . we're going to say what we're going to say and he's going to have his way. And if it's—

An Hon. Member: You sound like you are trying to invite yourself into.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: You know, Mr. Speaker, in the spirit of bipartisanship, if a hand was reached out, you know, we would carefully consider if it was in the best interest of Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Always the best interests of Bermuda!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: As I mentioned earlier today, Mr. Speaker, we are . . . you know, we had reviewed this. We had reviewed the consultation, and we also thanked the FS for reaching out to see if we had any concerns or discussions in the briefing. So, we have had a chance to review and are generally . . . not generally, we obviously support this stuff. We support this specific amendment.

We notice it unties the hands of CITA on how it deals with certain situations, which I think is good. It gives them a little more flexibility, and it allows them to perhaps be a little more commercial and efficient. We know that these things are very complex and very detailed. And it's natural that as time goes on certain corner cases and stuff get figured out and then can be corrected. So, we are glad to see that.

We're certainly grateful to the team at the Ministry and at the Agency because this stuff is very detailed, very granular. And so, we have confidence in what they are doing there. And we are happy to support this Bill because we know that the Government will not survive without this corporate income tax income. And the tax credits is a major part of allowing Bermuda to remain a—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —to remain a—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and the tax credits are an important part of Bermuda remaining an important jurisdiction.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I did have one . . . I did have one reservation. You know I have a lot of concerns about how some companies are receiving tax credits while not paying the corporate income tax. And we've talked about the insurance company that is receiving

\$20 million of tax credit and is turning that around and will be providing \$20 million to its shareholders through buybacks.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I am, to be frank, a little disappointed that we're not seeing any movement there. So, you know, I would say I had hopes to see it here, but I know that the consultation for this has happened, started quite a long time ago. So that wasn't realistic. But I still hold out high hopes for perhaps another tax credits amendment Bill this session that may address some of these issues or perhaps legislation for domestic insurers that will address some of those issues.

But for this amendment, Mr. Speaker, we are fully in support. So, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much. I am grateful for the support of the Opposition. I move the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Madam [Deputy Speaker].

[Crosstalk]

House in Committee at 4:56 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

HOUSE VISITOR

The Chairman: Members, before we began, I would like to recognise in the Gallery Senator Lindsay Simmons.

Welcome.

[Desk thumping]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Minister, we are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister, Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Your own St. George's people coming after you. See! You need help.

Anyhow, Madam Chairman, if I may, I would like to move clauses, all the clauses 1 through 16.

The Chairman: it has been moved that we consider all clauses, 1 through 16.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

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

Clause 1 provides for the citation of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 16 to provide for a more accurate calculation of the number of eligible employees, which in turn affects the calculation of the level of tax credit benefits awarded under the substance-based tax credit.

Clause 3 amends section 17 to update a cross reference.

Clause 4 amends section 18 to provide for adjustments to the calculation of the number of eligible employees due to corporate transactions when an employer company joins or leaves a group.

Clause 5 amends section 20 to provide for greater clarity in the calculation of expense-based tax credit benefits in "stub" periods that are less than 12 months.

Clause 6 repeals and inserts new subsections in section 22 to correct instances where a fiscal year was broken up into periods (for example, due to a corporate transaction) which could lead to inaccuracies in calculation of how tax credit benefits were apportioned over multiple fiscal years.

Clause 7 amends section 23 to take account of changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 8 amends section 24 to address potential inaccuracies that could arise when a "stub period" used in calculating tax credit benefits did not coincide with the same period used in calculating a corporate income tax charge.

Clause 9 amends section 25 to take account of the changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 10 amends section 26 to take account of the changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 11 amends section 27 to take account of the changes made to section 22 under clause 6.

Clause 12 [repeals] and substitutes section 33 to reduce administrative complexity where there are changes in a corporate group and the changes do not impact the calculation of a group's tax credit.

Clause 13 amends section 35 to provide that the accrual of tax credit benefits against designated tax refund reserve fund shall occur for all tax credit recipients (and not just recipients who are within the charge to corporate income tax).

Clause 14 amends section 37 to correct references to the tax credit claim form.

Clause 15 repeals and substitutes section 39 to clarify how interest on amounts that are paid out due to overstatement is calculated.

Clause 16 provides for a consequential amendment to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act 1969 to reflect the impact of the amendment to section 35 under clause 12.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 16?

There are no other persons.
Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, don't the decorations on my desk in the House look absolutely lovely?

The Chairman: No.

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm sorry.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: It matches with my tie, it's like—

The Chairman: It does match your tie, but I do see a St. George's flag there, which is beautiful. It's beautiful.

Hon. E. David Burt: Your vision is like your voice right now. Anyhow . . .

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 16 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 16 be approved.

Are there any objections?
There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 16 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Chairman, thank you.
I move the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections?
There are none.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

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

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

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 5:00 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 being reported to House as printed?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

That now moves us on to the next item on the Order Paper. That item is the second reading of the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Health.

Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026. Hereinafter, I'll refer to it as the 2026 Amendment Act.

This Bill is a technical and housekeeping measure. It makes consequential amendments arising from the Bermuda Health Council Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 to ensure that the legislative framework remains clear, consistent, and free from unnecessary duplication. The Bill does not introduce new policy or substantive regulatory requirements. Rather, it refines the existing legislative framework by removing duplicate provisions and improving the cohesiveness of the legislation.

The 2024 Amendment Act was introduced in response to long-standing concerns regarding the operation of health service providers without an appropriate regulatory framework, together with inadequate oversight and maintenance requirements for high-risk health technology. Prior to the enactment of the 2024 Act, the regulation of health service providers was fragmented across several pieces of legislation. Pharmacies were regulated under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979, while hospitals, clinical laboratories, and diagnostic imaging facilities were regulated under the Public Health Act 1949.

Similarly, regulation of high-[risk] health technology was primarily limited to equipment falling within the scope of the Radiation Act 1972. While these Acts established important regulatory controls within their respective areas, they did not provide a comprehensive or consistent framework for regulating health service providers and high-risk health technology. This resulted in gaps in regulatory oversight, limitations in enforcement, and inconsistencies between legislative intent and operational practice.

Mr. Speaker, the 2024 Amendment Act addressed these shortcomings by establishing a modern regulatory framework for health service providers and high-risk health technology, founded on the principles of safety, quality, and sustainability in the delivery of health services. Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Health Council Amendment (No. 2) Act introduced a new regulatory regime for health service providers and high-risk health technology.

As a consequence of those reforms, certain existing provisions now overlap or duplicate the new regulatory framework. Mr. Speaker, this Bill completes the consequential legislative amendments that were required to remove those duplicate provisions, clarify the operation of the legislative framework, and ensure that the regulatory responsibilities of the Bermuda Health Council, health service providers, and owners and operators of high-risk health technology are set out in a clear, consistent, and coherent manner.

The amendments are technical and consequential in nature. They are intended to improve legislative clarity, reduce unnecessary administrative duplication, and support the efficient administration of the regulatory regime while maintaining the existing standards of regulatory oversight.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Honourable and Learned Minister.

As the Minister rightly said to this Honourable House, this Bill is a tidying-up Bill. What it is effectively doing is taking three old bits of legislation and taking

out certain powers as exercised under those three old bits of legislation. They are the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979, the Public Health Act 1949, and the Radiation Act 1972, and then rehousing those within the context of the principal Act, which is the [Bermuda] Health Council Act 2004. And that is my understanding of this Bill, and if I have that wrong, then I invite the Honourable Minister to correct that.

I do have two further quick points for the Minister, and if they can be addressed then perhaps we could avoid any Committee. One is . . . I think there may be a typo at page 2 of the Bill, under clause 1, subsection (2), where it says: "Section 2 of the Act is—

The Speaker: You should actually leave that for the Committee. That is part of the Committee business. [IN-AUDIBLE]

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: All right. I was just going to flag it now. But okay. I'll wait. Okay. Fine.

The Speaker: It is Committee business.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Fine. No problem.

Then the only non-typo question is this: Is the Minister comfortable that all of the powers that are now being repealed and revoked in the old legislation are in fact moving across and well-housed in the new legislation?

I ask because I remember one of my first outings in this Honourable House was when we rehoused everything but we forgot some bits, and we had to come back and fix it. But if the Minister is comfortable, I'm grateful.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

None?

Minister.

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

I thank the Honourable and Learned friend for his question. We are comfortable. This, unfortunately, is a consequential amendment of tidying up. It was something that was picked up by the drafter, and we immediately moved to address that. So yes, we are comfortable in that regard.

And I'm looking for the typo, but I'll wait until we get into Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Deputy [Speaker].

House in Committee at 5:04 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL**BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL
(MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026**

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Bermuda Health Council \(Miscellaneous Amendments\) Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister in charge.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.
I'd like to move all three clauses, please. Four clauses.

The Chairman: It has been proposed that we consider all four clauses.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides the title of the Bill.

Clause 2 gives effect to Schedule 1 which repeals the powers of the Minister of Health to (a) register and regulate pharmacies under the Pharmacy and Poisons Act 1979; (b) register and regulate clinical laboratories, diagnostic facilities, and hospitals under the Public Health Act 1949; and [(c)] licence those substances and apparatus under the Radiation Act 1972 which fall within the definition of high-risk [health] technology.

Madam Chairman, with your leave, I did move all four clauses but there is . . . a typo that the Honourable and Learned Member has picked up—

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —which is actually in clause 1. Should we address that now before I move to the other clauses?

The Chairman: Yes, we can. Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. Thank you.

The Chairman: You could just go ahead and address it.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay.
MP Pearman, shall I raise it?

[No audible response]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. Thank you.
Madam Chairman, and I think this can be adequately addressed under the slip rule.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: [Schedule 1] clause 1 [subsection] (2), at the end. It says: "Section 2 of the Act is amended in the definition of 'Registrar' by repealing paragraph . . ." And it should say "three four" *[sic]* and there is a "(b)." So, if we can just make that amendment under the slip rule before this is actually sent to the Senate.

The Chairman: Yes. Yes, this is a simple amendment so we can just do it now.

Are there any persons against that amendment being made?

There are none, so.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thanks, Madam Chairman.

Clause 3 gives effect to Schedule 2 which (a) amends section 2 of the Bermuda Health Council Act 2004 by amending the definition of "health services" to add the word "pharmacy" and section 15A to provide for the Bermuda Health Council to publish a notice of the names of institutions [or] bodies approved by the Council.

Clause 4 provides for this Act to come into operation on such day as the Minister of Health appoints by notice published in the *Gazette*.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

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

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It was moved that the preamble be approved.

Any objections?

There are none.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be reported to the House—

The Chairman: Schedule. Schedule. Schedule. Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. Thank you.
I move that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

Any objections?
There are none.

[Motion carried: Schedules 1 and 2 passed.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be reported to the House . . . as amended.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Okay. No, it's not an amendment.

The Chairman: It's not really; it's just a typo correction.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Yes. So, it would be as printed. Yes.

The Chairman: Okay.

It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed. Yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Chairman: Any objections?
No.
So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

House resumed at 5:08 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed by the typo that was corrected?
There are no objections. Good.

We'll now move on to [Order] No. 5, which is consideration of the Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27. And again, in the name of the Finance Minister and Premier.
Premier, you have the floor.

BILL

SECOND READING

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) 2026/27

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

Mr. Speaker, you won't be here long, clearly,—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —because in accordance with Standing Order 43(4) and 43(5) I move that the Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 be approved and the House resolve itself into Committee of the whole [House] to consider said estimates.

The Speaker: Ah! Premier, I'm pleased to hear that.
Any objections to that?

Deputy [Speaker], it looks like you're back in the Chair for a while.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you.

House in Committee at 5:09 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) 2026/27

The Chairman: We are now in Committee of Supply on [Supplementary Estimate \(No. 1\) for financial year 2026/27](#).
Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much. I'll press ahead.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

Madam Chairman, I will give an introduction for the Committee of Supply on the Supplementary Estimate. Then, of course, each Minister will move their individual heads as printed.

Madam Chairman, the Schedule identifies five items totalling \$22,263,245 made up of \$4,763,245 on

current account and \$17,500,000 on capital account, the total Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27. Of this, \$2.5 million pertains to recent prison review report recommendations for both operational and capital requirements, \$3.3 million of additional grant funding to Bermuda College to support operational strategic requirements, \$15.2 million for recent approval to purchase Compass Point to support the government office accommodation needs, and \$1.3 million to support government-wide IT upgrades.

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 is anticipated to be a technical supplementary. As the Ministry of Finance continues to strengthen its monitoring control of all government expenditure, a technical supplementary indicates the requirement for additional funding can be met within the original appropriate estimates inclusive of prior approved supplementary estimates. However, it cannot be transferred since they are appropriated within another Ministry and/or capital account.

In respect to the three capital projects taken from existing capital projects . . . have been identified. However, a technical supplementary is required to establish a revised total authorised figure. Honourable Members will recall the criteria for determining debatable supplementary estimates require all items on current account to be debated if the total current account spend of the Ministry shows an increase of greater than 10 per cent or \$250,000 when compared to the original estimate. All capital items are debatable.

Applying the criteria that I just described, the two current account items are debatable, and I would therefore move that the Committee of the Whole [House] do take under consideration current account items 1 and 2, and capital account items 3 through 5.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

We are in Committee of Supply, and at this point, we will be considering Head 25, I believe it is.

I call on the respective Minister, Junior Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

HOUSE VISITOR

The Chairman: While the Junior Minister is getting ready, I just want to acknowledge the Attorney General, Senator Kim Wilson, *[sic]* Minister of Justice.

Some Hon. Members: Wilkerson.

[Desk thumping]

The Chairman: Wilkerson, sorry. Yes.
Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good afternoon, Madam Chairman, and good afternoon to the listening audience.

Madam Chairman, Department of Corrections Supplemental for 2026/27. In the 2026/27 fiscal year, Honourable Members were asked to—

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Yes.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that Item No. 1, Head 24—

The Chairman: Head 25.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Head 25. (I have the wrong one.)
[Head 25] be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Head 25 be now taken under consideration.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE—HEAD 25

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

In 2026/27 fiscal year, Honourable Members were asked to approve a supplementary estimate to support the Department of Corrections in carrying out initiatives arising from the recommendations of the Overseas Territories Inspection Report. The initiatives represent critical interventions required to address key risks and deficiencies—

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Just one moment, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

An Hon. Member: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Can you please remind when individuals who are coming in to support Ministers into this House, they should be acknowledged when they enter the House, and they should at least wait for you to let them into the House, and then they're allowed to sit in the Gallery or in the area to support the Minister. Thank you.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you, Member.

I think you've clarified what had to happen, so I hope that the person does recognise that rule that we have in the House.

Thank you.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I'll continue, Madam Chairman.

The initiatives represent critical interventions required to address key risks and deficiencies identified in the report at a total cost of \$2,463,245. This request was driven by urgent operational needs and by the Government's broader commitment to strengthening rehabilitation, reducing recidivism, and promoting safer communities through restorative justice.

Madam Chairman, as the final recommendations of the Inspection Report were not received during the budget preparation and submission period, the costs associated with these initiatives were not included in the department's 2026/27 budget submission. In keeping with responsible fiscal management, the Ministry of Justice undertook a detailed review to identify possible savings environments within its existing allocation. That review confirmed that no internal resources were available to meet the department's statutory and operational obligations without compromising other essential services. Accordingly, in July 2026, a supplementary allocation of \$2,463,245 was approved to support the implementation of the initiatives.

Madam Chairman, a key component of this supplementary allocation is funding for four full-time instructors at a cost of \$617,850. The department is heavily reliant on vendors and volunteers to deliver rehabilitative services and programmes.

While these partnerships remain valuable, the availability of providers and scope of contracted services can fluctuate, creating challenges in maintaining consistent programme delivery. The addition of full-time instructors will significantly enhance the continuity and reliability of rehabilitative services, ensuring that individuals in our care have regular access to education, vocational, and life skills interventions that support positive change and reintegration into society.

Madam Chairman, the supplementary allocation also provides funding for full-time maintenance staff at a cost of \$357,000. The consistent maintenance of the department's facilities is essential to ensuring a safe, secure, and humane environment for both staff and inmates. A dedicated team of five maintenance staff will allow the department to address repairs and infrastructure issues in a more timely and proactive manner, reduce reliance on external contractors for routine work, and support compliance with recommended operational and institutional standards identified through the inspection process.

Madam Chairman, the supplementary allocation provides funding for staff training at a cost of \$50,000. Enhanced staff training will be a fundamental requirement to support the reform initiatives and address operational challenges. This initiative is essential to support both immediate operational effectiveness and long-term reform goals. In addition to operational initiatives, policy and legislative modernisation is required to align operations with the recommendations from the report.

The supplementary allocation provides funding for service providers to provide delivery of policy review and modernisation of legislation and project management at a cost of \$338,395.

Madam Chairman, financial support for Astor House directly advances the mandate of the Department of Corrections. As a supervised transitional housing facility for released inmates, Astor House will play a critical role in supporting successful integration into the community. Evidence has shown that structured transitional housing and supervision following release contribute to reduce recidivism and improve public safety. Accordingly, the supplementary allocation of \$100,000 will enable Astor House to provide supervised transitional housing for selected released inmates who are on parole. It will assist parolees in making a successful transition back into society while remaining under appropriate supervision.

Lastly, Madam Chairman, facility conditions including improved ventilation were highlighted as a key concern in the review report. Ageing infrastructure and deferred maintenance have contributed to operational deficiencies and deterioration of living working conditions. Facility upgrades also include improvements to vocational workshops so they can be better utilised for vocational classes. Improved ventilation and critical upgrades are essential for compliance to health and safety standards and to provide humane conditions for inmates and staff.

Madam Chairman, this supplemental funding reflects the Government's commitment to strengthening the correctional system through sustainable operational improvements, enhanced rehabilitation services, and the provision of safe and secure facilities. Together, these measures will support better outcomes for those in our care, improve working conditions for our officers and staff, and contribute to a more effective and resilient correction system in our Justice system.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10.

Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I thank the Junior Minister for his fulsome explanation of the supplementary estimate for Corrections.

I also want to take note as well that I've had communication with the Permanent Secretary, Mr. David Roberts, who's been most helpful with the discussion that we've had about how we can work together to make sure that the Department of Corrections and the Ministry achieve its objectives.

Regarding the supplementary estimate, I just want a bit of detail, so the questions are going to be . . . reference that. In terms of the rationale for it, given the recommendations of the report, it makes absolute

sense and we're all in agreement with that. The POA has said it, the service providers, so we're all in agreement.

Regarding the four full-time instructors, can you give us the breakdown in terms of are those for vocational programmes and/or rehabilitation programmes and what the breakdown is for that?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Did you want to ask all your questions first?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: You put all your questions first. Okay.

Mr. Robert King: Regarding the identified programmes, both vocational, educational and rehabilitative, what specific programmes and when will they start to be delivered?

Regarding the maintenance positions, there are going to be five new persons and, if my understanding is correct, they are going to be for all facilities, and this is going to be part of an ongoing maintenance and repair programme.

Regarding the staff training, what type of specific training is the staff going to receive? And regarding staff training, do we have a full complement of Correctional officers to meet the needs of the facilities?

Regarding the vocational workshop being fitted out for purpose, has the supplementary estimate taken into consideration the repairs for those buildings, the cost of instructors and fully fitting them out with the necessary equipment and materials necessary to ensure the programme's success?

Those are my questions. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

There being none . . . Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Can I just ask, Madam Chairman, if the Member can repeat one of his questions?

The Chairman: Certainly.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I have it down as the second set that you asked. You had asked [about] the maintenance staff and then it was a question after that. I think I overlooked it.

Mr. Robert King: The question after that was regarding staff training, specifically about what type of training, and was that also related to new Correctional officers that are going to be coming on board? Thanks.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Member.

To your first question in regard to the four full-time instructors, they will be for the rehabilitative programme instructors. I would have to get specifically what those programmes are, but I will endeavour to get that.

Your question in regard to the five full-time maintenance staff, that was in regard to the facilities? Okay, I would have to get that.

And, Madam Chairman, I'll let him ask another question while I look to get the answers.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you.

I understand that there was a need for another psychologist in terms of the rehabilitative staff. Is one of those positions going to be for a forensic psychologist?

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

Minister, Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

In regard to the question of the staffing level, at present there is not a full complement of staff, but we are currently recruiting to get a full complement. And we have completed a staff profiling exercise to maximise our human resources.

And the question in regard to the maintenance, the staff would include maintenance of all facilities, including plumbing, electrical, carpentry, and general maintenance.

And the question in regard to repairs and costs, the total amount for the vocational does include the repairs and to fix up the location and the cost of instructors.

Mr. Robert King: And equipment.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And equipment.

I am waiting to receive that answer. But if there's any other questions, another Member might have.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

There are none, Junior Minister.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: I recognise the Member from constituency 17.

Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Chairman, I thank the Junior Minister for bringing the supplementary estimates. We have been talking about progressing and reforming our correction system. And I believe this demonstrates our commitment to ensuring that we have a reform system that produces the outcomes that are actually necessary.

And so, we did undertake a review. As a result of that review, there were a number of gaps identified. Not all of the gaps. Some of them are operational and administrative. And others require a greater injection of funds. What we didn't want to do is wait [until] an entire new budgetary process passes to address those particular gaps. The most important thing is that the system ultimately benefits by the money that we're injecting in the system today. And so that is important.

But it is this Government's commitment to ensuring that we have real reform. And we said that we want to reform our criminal justice system. We said that we want to ensure that our prisons produce the outcomes that they were mandated to produce. And that's just not housing individuals who have committed crimes. But that's also providing enriching interventions where those persons can rehabilitate and come back in society and be productive in our economy.

And so, while we look at these being supplementary estimates, I think we should be looking at it from a lens of investing in a system that actually will produce better outcomes for the people who are actually operating within the system. And that is the workers as well as the inmates. The workers deserve to work in a dignified work environment with their basic standards being met, their safety being met, as well as the inmates deserve to have programmes in place, the support in place that they need, whether it be support from a mental health standpoint or support from assisting them with other areas of rehabilitation and also preparing for employment and the future world of work when they transition out of the system back into society in earnest.

And so, I thank the Minister for bringing this Bill. It is very much needed, but it is a Government that is actually being responsive to the needs, not just getting a report that says that we have gaps that we need to close and not doing anything about it. And so, I thank the Junior Minister for bringing this.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

I recognise the Member from constituency 10.
Member.

Mr. Robert King: I'm fully in full agreement . . . we are, on this side of the House, in terms of the initiatives.

We've talked about those previously. Absolutely. And we need them to be successful because we know the effect that it will have, the positive effect that it will have on the community.

Towards that end, understanding the safety and security of the persons who work inside of the walls is [there] consideration in this supplementary estimate for drone nets and cell phone jammers, understanding that contraband coming into the prison, drugs and otherwise, impacts on programme efficacy and safety.

And regarding the programmes, what is the timeline for implementation, understanding that the process has already started?

And the third question is, will data be collected and relied upon to inform programme delivery in terms of best practice, what works, what is not working? And we are measuring performance and making the necessary adjustments to ensure programme success and thereby safeguarding the community by ensuring that incarcerated persons get the necessary skills and training and services required for them to be successful.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through . . . Sorry, speak to Head 25?

I recognise the [Junior] Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I just want to go back to one of the questions that [was] asked in regard to the repairs, the cost of the vocation. It includes also the equipment and any upgrades needed for the location.

Additionally, the question in regard to the four full-time instructors. The courses will be carpentry, tiling, motor mechanics and HVAC.

And in regard to your question about psychologists, consideration will be given to the necessary professional resources to deliver the required interventions to drive change.

And the last two questions you asked, one was, is there a location to prevent drugs and drones, and all that? Yes.

I will wait to receive the advice from the technical. And then, can you again just restate the last question you asked in regard to, I believe it was deadlines and the measurements of the programmes?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, what I was speaking to . . . sorry.

The Chairman: Go ahead, continue.

Mr. Robert King: Thank you.

I was . . . what I was speaking to was performance measures, key performance indicators, key performance measures, making sure that what we are doing is working in achieving its objective, which is reducing recidivism by providing incarcerated persons with

the necessary skills and services so that they can adopt and maintain a healthy lifestyle, thinking, beliefs and behaviours. So, making sure that what we do works in accordance with best practice in other jurisdictions.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 25?

There are none.

[Junior] Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you again, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, as I wait to get the information, I do just want to say that part of this reform of the Ministry of Justice when it comes to Corrections is to ensure that when persons complete their time at Westgate and they are released back to society is that they will come out better than [when] they went in and they would have, whether it be skills or tools, [what is] needed to help reintegrate themselves back to society.

And to that end, the question of measurements, appropriate key performance indicators have been developed consistent with international standards. So as was stated in my brief, there was an overseas entity that came and did an assessment. They provided the recommendation. So, our measurements, again, will be consistent with those standards that they have used. And further to that response, this will range from level of participation and certification.

Madam Chairman, as mentioned in the brief, again, we are doing what we can to try and not only provide better opportunities for the inmates, but again, to improve the living conditions, and for the staff who are working up there. And so, this supplementary goes to achieve those ends in better providing the opportunities for inmates so that when they do come out, they will be able to have a better or more positive impact than when they went in.

To the question, again, in regard to how we measure, this will also go to this level. This will range from level of participation and certification and as well as level of recidivism. That will be measured also.

And I think that's all the questions that I did have, Madam Chairman. I hope I was able to answer them as best as the Member asked. And again . . .

The Chairman: So now you can move Head 25.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: All right.

The Chairman: I'll just ask, just in case any other persons wish to speak to Head 25.

[No audible response]

The Chairman: Continue, Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that Item No. 1, Head 25, be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item No. 1, Head 25, be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Justice, Head 25, Corrections passed.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: That takes us on to Item No. 2, under the Ministry of Education. And we're looking at Head 41.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Chairman and St. George's supporter.

The Chairman: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: I move that Item No. 2, Head 41, now be taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item [No.] 2, Head 41, be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION—HEAD 41

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Madam Chairman, I rise to inform Honourable Members of the supplementary estimate for Bermuda College Head 41 for the financial year 2026/27 in the amount of \$3,300,000.

Madam Chairman, this request is being brought forward to support Bermuda College to address urgent operational and strategic funding requirements that were not fully captured in the approved 2026/27 operational grant. It is also intended to protect programme delivery, strengthen student support, and maintain accreditation readiness, modernise critical systems, and support the phased implementation of the Bermuda College's Strategic Plan 2025–2030.

Madam Chairman, for the 2026/27 fiscal year, the approved operating grant for the Bermuda College is \$15,573,710. The College projects tuition and other own source revenue of approximately \$3,478,000. Its current operating budget is \$19,051,474. However, the College has advised that it requires an additional \$[3],300,000 for a total of \$22,381,474. The request before this Honourable House is therefore a targeted request to stabilise the College's operating position while enabling necessary investments in staffing, student

support, technology, facilities planning, reporting, and accreditation-related capacity.

Madam Chairman, Honourable Members will be aware that Bermuda College is implementing its Strategic Plan 2025–2030. The Plan will expand programme accessibility, attract and retain students, strengthen institutional excellence, improve alignment with Bermuda's workforce and economic priorities, and ensure the College remains a strong and credible post-secondary institution.

Unfortunately, the approved grant does not fully reflect the resources required to deliver the Strategic Plan and to meet current institutional obligations. The Ministry has begun working with the College to improve the budget preparation process, so the College builds its annual budget using a structured and adapted zero-based budgeting approach that is evidence-based and closely connected to its Strategic Plan.

Madam Chairman, the funding requested is allocated across eight priority areas as follows:

Funds totalling \$1,310,000 are requested for academic and instructional staffing. The College has identified student-facing academic and instructional posts needed for the 2025–2027 academic year. These include lecturers in English, mathematics, physics, political science, history, accounting, computer information systems, hospitality management, and insurance reinsurance. Student-facing support in financial aid, health sciences, and mathematics is also required. They reflect continuity, investment, and growth in local pathways for education and employment in growth areas that reflect Bermuda's major economic pillars. These posts are required to maintain appropriate student-faculty ratios, deliver existing programmes, and expand workforce-aligned programming.

Madam Chairman, \$320,000 is requested to fund four positions needed to strengthen student services including financial aid, testing, security, and related support functions. Student success depends not only on classroom instruction but also on timely access to advising, counselling, tutoring, financial aid support, testing services, and administrative assistance.

Ensuring the right kind of student supports are in place is critical for student success and therefore to attract and retain students. Madam Chairman, \$225,000 is requested for a facilities master plan. Bermuda College has made approximately \$5 million in facility and infrastructure modernisation investments over the past four years, including investments to address safety and health risks associated with ageing infrastructure.

The facilities master plan will provide a structured roadmap for campus modernisation, facilities use, safety and health for faculty and students, capital renewal, and future investment.

Madam Chairman, \$190,000 is requested for immediate operational maintenance and campus modernisation support. This will assist with the deferred maintenance pressures and help protect the learning

environment for students, facility staff, and the wider college community.

Madam Chairman, \$770,000 is requested to replace the College's Enterprise Resource Planning system, or ERP. This is a core institutional system that supports student information, finance, human resources, purchasing, reporting, and operational management. The College's current ERP system is approaching end of life and will be discontinued, which creates operational financial reporting, compliance, and data integrity risks. Replacement is necessary to modernise institutional systems, improve financial controls, and support real-time decision-making.

Madam Chairman, \$100,000 is requested for a student accounts portal to support self-service billing and account management for students and customers. This is directly linked to the College's own source revenue because tuition and ancillary revenue depend on efficient billing, collection, and account management. This investment will improve billing accuracy, collections, cash flow, and the student experience.

Madam Chairman, \$300,000 is requested for a data governance and reporting framework. Both the Ministry of Education and the New England Commission of Higher [Education], NECHE, the College's accrediting body, require more robust, granular, and transparent reporting. A formal data governance framework will support data quality, key performance indicators, reporting, accreditation compliance, institutional transparency, and evidence-based decision-making.

Madam Chairman, \$85,000 is requested for an economic impact assessment. This will provide independent evidence of Bermuda College's contribution to workforce development, graduate outcomes, economic resilience, productivity, and return on public investment. That work is important in order for public investment in Bermuda College to be linked to national outcomes and measurable benefits.

Madam Chairman, this supplementary estimate is necessary to help Bermuda College rise to its potential by continuous improvement of its core operational programming, ensuring that it meets the requirements of accreditation and that it delivers its Strategic Plan for improved outcomes, sustainability, and accountability. Accordingly, I ask Honourable Members to support the supplementary estimate of \$3,300,000 for Bermuda College, Head 41, for fiscal year 2026/27.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 41?

I recognise the Opposition Leader.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you to the Minister for laying out where the \$3,300,000 will be spent for the Bermuda College, and for the grant.

Just a couple of questions because this is a significant increase from the original budget that we passed earlier this year.

Can the Minister let us know whether this \$3,300,000 was actually part of an original request that didn't get implemented in that first grant, whether this was information that had been discussed prior to the budget, or [are] these new items that have been brought in place since the budget was passed?

Specifically, on that, the Minister mentioned stabilising and staffing technology. I was trying to quickly note down all the different areas that were being covered. In that, some of it seemed to be based off of some of the assessments that were coming in order for us to get accreditation.

I guess the question is: Is this really just a timing issue where that accreditation information happened after the budget had been passed, and for that reason there are certain things that now have to be covered and we can't wait for them to be covered because we need those accreditations? If that's the context that we're talking about, then obviously we understand that and we would support that.

Can the Minister also let us know whether . . . I think I was getting from this that the potential is that there are more students that are going to be attending the Bermuda College. And because of that there now needs to be an increase in resources in order to cover that increase in the students. If that is the case, I think that would be important for us to know.

I know that in attending the CedarBridge graduation, it was one of the things that was brought up several times. There seems to be more students who are attending the Bermuda College. And I know that it is one of the mandates of the College to really increase the number of people who are attending our college so that we can understand how important it is that we have a college in Bermuda that gives access to accredited education, saves people money, but also gives them an opportunity to learn here in our environment.

So, if the Minister can let us know whether some of those changes that we're having to do to get this money is specifically because there's going to be increase. Because it sounded, from the information that the Minister gave, that we needed to increase instruction in certain areas, not because we don't have instructors now, but we need more instructors because of the increase in what is going to be needed.

In that context, can the Minister let us know, because I know that when you are looking to hire educators, this would have been a process that they are going to have to get on immediately because there's a recruiting process in order to get the level of instructors that they're going to want to have at the College. Can he let us know whether that is already in process so that we can make sure that when the College reopens that they actually have the resources that are needed.

The Minister also talked about the facilities master plan. Could the Minister let us know whether

this was something that had been requested previously and now we are getting to funding this plan, or was this once again something that came up through the accreditation process that it was then deemed to be necessary and that's why this is now having to be implemented and this cost has now come in the supplementary estimate?

The Minister talked about a deferred maintenance pressure. So, I guess my question is: Were there issues that the College had identified that needed to be addressed that were not addressed in the original budget and now they become critical because we want to make sure that we are maintaining the facility and improving the facility to continue to encourage students to go to the Bermuda College? And, if that is the case, is this something that we are going to have to continue to increase to make sure that the College is at the level that is necessary?

I guess a bigger question is: Now that we've moved from the original number to this new number in this budget year, does the Minister believe that this will be the targeted budget that we will need to go forward in order for the College to maintain the increase in student population? If that is true, the increase in maintenance needs, if that's what the case is, so that we have an understanding that going forward it won't be a supplementary estimate. This will be the new norm for what is necessary for the College to maintain itself. And if the Minister could let us know whether really the College might need even more than this going forward in order for them to be able to improve the facilities, do everything that is necessary to get the technology in place, the support for the students, so that as we move to making the College more accessible to more people, it is going to also mean that we're going to have to increase the resources for the College for it to be able to reach the level that I think everybody is looking for.

The Minister also looked at the outcomes that are connected to work. Can the Minister give us a little more detail on what that connection is between what I would gather would be the Department of Labour, what is necessary, what jobs are they looking for training for and then how that is then moved over to the College so that they can implement those courses to match what is going to be necessary from what is identified from labour, and whether those costs are identified that potentially we are going to have to see further increases as the Ministry of Labour identifies new areas that we need to have training in?

With that, I think I'll let the Minister answer those questions. Thank you.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 41?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: As my team is furiously writing, I will say I've only been on the docket for two weeks.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, no, but I have [delved] into this stuff.

The answer to the first question: Was this part of the original grant? It was not part of the original grant. It was actually a timing issue, which kind of goes into the next question. It was a timing issue. The NECHE report . . . the NECHE visit was in the middle of February. And so, it identified some things that needed to be done at that point. And so, it was a time . . . some of this is a timing issue for that.

The expected increase you asked about: [Will] more students be attending the College? Obviously, we talked . . . you've heard us talk about the College Promise Programme, which has seen an increase in students attending the Bermuda College as people . . . things cost a little bit more than they did back in the day. And people are seeing the value of attending the Bermuda College, especially under the College Promise Programme and able to get that associate's degree, you know, for practically nothing, and then move on to higher level education by saving two years' worth of tuition locally. So, we will be seeing more . . . We will be seeing more students attend the Bermuda College.

There are . . . Also, I've been made to understand (I don't see it here) that part of this plan is to introduce a reinsurance degree in this coming year. So that's where some of that staff is actually going to be there. We're also looking at revised programmes . . . revised programmes in engineering, needing physics classes and the like. So, there will be . . . there is a plan to increase student enrolment.

I'm trying to follow these things. And the hiring of educators is already well underway. And this funding is to actually pay those salaries, not to go out and find them. So, I've been made to understand they are in the docket. And if they showed up, there may not be the funding there for them.

The facilities master plan, which you did ask [about]. The facilities master plan is . . . again, that was timing, and it's currently being developed. And that's where the funding is being asked. I do recall reading in the brief that they were asking for funding. So that can be fully fleshed out as we move forward.

The next question was [about] deferred maintenance pressures. Were things allotted for in the original budget? Again, these are some things that have come up, basically a timing issue, and came up after the budget process had been completed. And you heard me speak to the Ministry comptroller and the Bermuda College working at what a refined budgeting process could look like moving forward so we can have a more accurate account on the particular day.

This kind of speaks to something that I know has always stuck in my craw, that our schooling system's budget doesn't align with government's budget. And you have each school year that crosses over two budget cycles. And so that can sometimes just not

potentially line up on how we want to do what we need to do with our schools.

I'm hoping when we talk about an Education Authority that they can look at it and say, *Hey, how do we realign our budget to suit the school year, so we don't actually have to budget up to halfway through the year and then look to budget the next time through that.*

Was this a targeted increase in grant? Okay. This supplemental will bring us up to the new norm for finance, and budget planning for the next cycle is underway. So, of course, these fundings, this funding is here. And if it's paying for, in this case, instructors, obviously it's going to be something that needs to be included in subsequent budgets. So, I think we're covered there.

And outcomes connected to work. I will say when you talked about connection of labour and the like, you may not be aware, but the Workforce Development is now located at the Bermuda College. So, there is a synergy there that's been created by moving them from their current location to the College. So, there is . . . and they work very, very closely with especially the PACE department. They work very, very closely, especially with the PACE department, to come up with, you know, training courses that helps upskill Bermudians who perhaps are looking to go back to school and gain another skill and the like.

So, I hope with those I've answered your questions, but I will sit down in case there are more.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak

I recognise the Opposition Leader. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

And thank you to the Minister for those answers. I really just have one further set of questions really on that maintenance plan and what the . . . Can you could give us some specifics on the maintenance that is necessary now? And are there some areas that we can look [at] that need to be addressed? So as we look forward to the maintenance of the College and the improvement of the College, I want to make sure that what we're doing is looking forward to it so that we don't need supplementals. We [will] actually know this is what the College needs in order to get to the goals that they're looking for, and this is how much it's going to cost.

So, can the Minister can give us an idea of what the maintenance is necessary right now under this \$3 million? Can he give us some details on that and the potential of what has been requested that might not already be in this one?

Thank you.

The Chairman: I recognise the Minister.

Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: As for looking in the future, that's what the master facilities plan will look like. I do know currently now if you go up there you see scaffolding all over the place where they're replacing roofs on different buildings and the like. I know when I was in my previous iteration in this we would . . . I was taken to a building, and you could stand inside and look and see the sunlight coming through.

So, I know they have been . . . we approved additional monies back then. And I understand exactly what you're saying. Because back then it was here's additional money for this, here's additional money for that. So, I'm very grateful to see that a full facilities plan is being designed so we can say this is what we need. And if it has to be a multi-year request, capital request, that can be planned for versus, kind of, you know, *oh, something else is wrong, let me fix that. Something else is wrong, let me fix that.*

And I do know upgrading the computer systems throughout the school, improving the Internet accessibility as we . . . the type of world we live in is all part of those things. So, having a master plan on how we go from where we are now to where we want to be is something that I'm grateful to hear that's happening and I look forward to seeing that in the eventual future.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to Head 41?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you Madam Chairman, and I thank the Shadow Education Minister and Leader of the Opposition . . . of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, Madam Chairman, I move that [Item] No. 2 and Head 41 now be approved.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item No. 2, Head 41 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Education, Head 41, Bermuda College passed.]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you Madam [Chairman]. And I will say that we will get you a Bermuda College tie to go with your CedarBridge tie.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Okay. All right. That takes us on to the next item, Item No. 3.

Junior Minister, I do realise that in your brief you already accounted for Corrections—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

The Chairman: So go ahead.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE—HEAD 65

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that Item No. 3, Head 65 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It's been moved that Item No. 3, Head 65 be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

The Chairman: There are none.

Go ahead. Speak to—

An Hon. Member: Madam Chairman, I move that No. 3, Head number 65, now be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Head 65 be approved. And again, I just want to remind everyone that when the Junior Minister did the previous [Head] 25, he also spoke to Head 65, so all that is really needed . . . and questions were asked on those. So, all that is really needed is for us to approve it.

So, are there any objections to approve Head 65?

There are none. So approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Justice, Head 65, passed.]

The Chairman: Okay, that takes us to item 4, Public Lands and Buildings.

Minister, go ahead.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move that item No. 4, Head 65 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 4, Head 65 be taken under consideration.

Any objections?

There are none, continue.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT—HEAD 65

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I shall not be long, very quick. Madam Chairman, last week the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance tabled supplementary estimates totalling \$22.3 million, which included funding to complete the Government's acquisition of the Compass Point building.

Madam Chairman, you will recall that on the 12th of June of this year, this House approved the purchase of Compass Point. During that debate it was explained that the negotiated purchase price of \$14.5

million would be financed through supplementary funding. The additional appropriation before the House today will complete the purchase and provide funding for the immediate works required to prepare the building for Government occupancy.

Madam Chairman, this investment supports Government's long-term strategy of reducing expenditure on privately leased office accommodation while strengthening the government estate. Rather than continuing to spend millions of dollars each year on commercial rent, this acquisition allows Government to invest in an asset that will deliver value for the people of Bermuda for decades to come.

The Compass Point building provides more than 81,000 square feet of office accommodation and, importantly, creates the flexibility needed to temporarily relocate government departments while ageing public buildings undergo refurbishment and modernisation. This is a critical component of our wider estate management strategy that will enable important capital works that would otherwise be far more difficult to undertake.

Madam Chairman, the decision to acquire Compass Point has already been approved by this Honourable House. Today's supplementary estimate simply provides the funding necessary to implement that decision and move this important initiative forward.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 4, Head 65?

I recognise the Member from constituency 9.

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

Thank you, Minister, for that brief explanation.

[I have a] couple of questions for the Minister. He says the differential between the \$14.5 [million] purchase price and the \$15.2 [million] that we see here today is for funding to complete the purchase and to start the works required. Are we talking about legal fees? Because I calculate \$700,000. Is that for legal fees? And how does that . . . What is the amount of the legal fees if that is legal fees?

And when we had the motion for this purchase, we talked about . . . I believe it was \$1.5 million that was the estimated cost for repairs. Is that . . . You say start of works . . . Is that start of works part of the roof repairs, or is this some internal fittings to get that ready? And if it is not the roof, then when can we expect funds coming through, or the supplemental for that, if money is required?

The Chairman: Minister?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you.

I thank the Honourable Member for his question. The reality is that the vast majority of that

\$700,000 difference (He is correct.) will go towards roof repairs. It is the most critical piece of repair that needs to happen, but a very small portion. And I think it is . . . I think it is roughly \$20,000. It is a very insignificant in comparison as a relation to some IT upgrades.

The Chairman: Okay, are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 4, Head 65?

I recognise the Member from constituency nine.

Mr. Vance Campbell: So is the . . . Was the estimate, Minister, for the roof repairs of one . . . I believe it was \$1.5 million when we previously debated this. Are we just dealing with the most important at this time and other roof repairs will follow?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes. Yes, that is correct. The focus is repairing. There are some leaks at the top. The focus is on repairing those leaks. But, certainly in subsequent budgets, there will be proportionate funding to assist with further repairs so that we can move in and complete.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 4, Head 65?

There being none . . . Minister.

An Hon. Member: Thank you, Madam Chairman. And I thank the Honourable Member for his questions.

And with that I move that item No. 4, Head 65 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 4, Head 65 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are not. So approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works and Environment, Head 65, passed.]

The Chairman: That brings us to the final item, item 5, Head 66, and I call on the relevant Minister [for] Information and Digital Technologies.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that item number—

The Chairman: Five.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —No. 5, Head—

The Chairman: Sixty-six.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I have Head 43. That is why I was triple checking. [It is] 66 in the paper. Okay. It may be just a typo in my documentation. I am—

The Chairman: It comes under capital works, so that is why it might be different.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Okay, no problem. So, [I move that Head] 66 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 5, Head 66 be considered. Are there any objections? There are none.

Continue.

MINISTRY OF DIGITAL INNOVATION—HEAD 66

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I rise to seek approval for the supplemental funding in the amount of \$1,300,000 for the Department of Information and Digital Technologies under Head 66 for the 2026/27 fiscal year.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Information and Digital Technologies is responsible for providing and supporting the government's enterprise technology environment. One of the most critical components of that environment is the government's Microsoft 365 platform, which supports email, collaboration, document management, cybersecurity, and productivity services for public officers across the ministries and departments. The platform is currently licenced for 2,700 users government-wide with every ministry and department covered under this arrangement.

Madam Chairman, the need for supplemental funding arises from a budget transition oversight. This is an administrative gap in the budget preparation process, specifically the transfer of a known reoccurring cost between funding categories and not a lapse in expenditure control or contract management.

The initial acquisition of Microsoft 365 licences was funded through the 2025/26 capital budget as part of the government's digital modernisation programme. That programme's purpose is to move government service delivery onto a secure cloud-based platform that is easier for the public to access and use, and these licences are the foundation on which it runs. One tangible example is departments' use of Microsoft forms, which lets ministries put applications and requests online so a user of a government service does not need to visit the government office in person for routine transactions.

The licensing arrangement also carries security benefits under the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement. Government mailbox and cloud storage data can be held within a designated data residency location strengthening the protection of government and public information. While the initial acquisition was

appropriately funded as a capital investment, the Microsoft 365 operates on a subscription-based model that requires annual licence renewals. As such, the reoccurring renewal cost should have transitioned to the department's current account budget beginning in the fiscal year 2026/27. However, during the budget development process, the transition of these reoccurring costs from capital funding to operational funding was not reflected in the department's approved budget resulting in an unfunded requirement for the licence renewal period.

The department has since revised its budget preparation procedures to ensure that reoccurring subscription costs transition from capital to current account funding and are identified and captured at the point of a budget submission. The recurring renewal costs for these licences will be reflected in the department's approved 2027/28 current account budget, and no further supplemental requests of this nature are anticipated. Consequently, supplemental funding is required to meet the government's contractual licencing obligations and ensure uninterrupted access to these critical services through the 31st of March 2027.

Madam Chairman, the supplemental funding request totals \$1,300,000 and will be used exclusively for the renewal of the Microsoft 365 subscription licence. This is a like-for-like renewal of the department's existing complement of the 2700 licences. This represents maintenance, not expansion of the current licence count, and no additional licences are being procured under this request. The amount reflects the renewal cost under the government's existing Microsoft Enterprise Agreement and is [a] renewal of existing licences therefore not subject to new competitive procurement.

This funding will ensure the continued availability of government email and calendar services, Microsoft Teams communication and collaboration capabilities, SharePoint document management services, OneDrive cloud storage services, identity management and cybersecurity protections, and productivity applications used daily by public officers.

Madam Chairman, beyond continuity of service, maintaining this licence base carries practical value for public service delivery. It allows the departments to keep the online self-service tools referenced above running, which support more effective and accessible interactions between the government and the people that [it] serves and which reduce the administrative burden on the public officers who would otherwise have to process the same transactions manually.

Madam Chairman, failure to secure this funding would result in the expiration of the licences and loss of access by government users, deleting, disruption and email services, loss of collaboration capabilities, increased business continuity, security, and operational risks. Given the government's reliance on Microsoft 365 as a core enterprise platform, licence

expiration would materially impact government operations and the delivery of public services.

Approval of the supplemental funding request, Madam Chairman, will ensure that the continuity of these critical digital services across government are maintained and secure access to essential information and community communication systems.

Madam Chairman, I therefore recommend approval of the supplemental funding in the amount of \$1,300,000 for the Department of Information and Digital Technologies to provide for the renewal of the Microsoft 365 subscription licence and ensure the continued operation of critical government technology services.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to item 5, Head 66?

There are no other persons.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that item No. 5, Head 66 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 5, Head 66 be approved.

Are there any objections? There are none.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Digital Information, Head 66, passed.]

The Chairman: I now call on the Minister of Housing and Municipalities.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Madam Acting Chairman.

I move that the Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 be reported as printed to the House.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections?

There are none. So approved.

[Motion carried: Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Gavel]

House resumed at 6:15 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 1) 2026/27

The Speaker: Deputy? Did you have a good run? Okay.

Members, are there . . . Consideration of Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) for financial year 2026/27 . . . [was] approved, and sent back to the House without any objections.

Thank you.

That means you are now moved on to item number 6. Item number 6 is the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 in the name of the Minister of Home of Affairs and Digital Transformation.

Minister?

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

I move that the Bill entitled the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

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

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

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

Mr. Speaker, I rise to present to this Honourable House the Bill entitled, the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026. This Bill amends the Cost of Living Commission Act 1974 and carries into it the work that this Government has invested for the people of Bermuda through oversight of the cost of essential goods, designation of critical services that shape household budgets, and cooperation between the Commission and Bermuda's regulators. It delivers another step in the Government's commitment to address affordability in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, before I speak to the clauses of this Bill, I thought it prudent to share what I brought with me to the House of Assembly today. And for Honourable Members' awareness, and every Bermudian listening at home, I hold and have a bag of rice which is found in every kitchen cabinet on this Island. And I brought it because this legislation and its changes are about affordability. And I share it as the foundation of the legislative changes presented today.

Mr. Speaker, this very bag of rice explains today's amendments better than any statement or any clause or any explanation can. Rice and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Rice is an item—

Bermuda House of Assembly

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Rice is an item originally included in the Schedule of [the Cost of Living] (Essential Commodities) Regulations 2022. It has been a regulated staple since those regulations took effect in June of 2022. It enters Bermuda entirely free of customs duty. Not one grain of it [is] grown here in Bermuda. Every bag is produced overseas across the ocean, lands at Hamilton Docks through a single stevedoring provider, moves through a warehouse, and reaches a shelf.

Retailers themselves have told the Commission at its stakeholders' meeting of May 29, 2026, that freight accounts for around 60 per cent of the cost of landing goods on this Island, and that the grocery basket this bag of rice now sits in costs 38 per cent more than it did a decade ago. Measured over the last 10 years to 2025, this equates to more than double the rate of general inflation.

Mr. Speaker, the question that this bag of rice puts [to] us specifically reveals the truth of what it costs to land in our Island and what a family pays for it at the checkout. The legislative changes presented in this Honourable House today are built to bring transparency and oversight into that space.

Mr. Speaker, Bermudians old and young have told this Government in every parish and at every doorstep that the cost of living is felt hardest by those who can least afford it. I have personally heard from seniors forecasting how their pensions will reach, from young families weighing the grocery bill against their other competing monthly expenses, and from workers holding two jobs yet still finding themselves stretched at the end of the month. Honourable Members on both sides of this House have raised these pressures in this Chamber time and time again. And rightly so, because the call for action comes from every single constituency on this Island, from St. George's to Somerset, that we were each elected to represent.

Mr. Speaker, to understand what this Bill does, the House must also understand the history of this Act. The Cost of Living Commission Act was passed in 1974 in an era of global inflation as price control legislation. Its central part still carries the heading "Control of Price Increases of Specified Commodities." Its measure is a reasonable rate of return on investment and of reasonable reserves, which is the vocabulary that we know relates specifically to the cost of electricity.

The Parliament of 1974 built machinery that was intended to regulate what the people of that era considered as essential service and critical to daily life. The Second Schedule of that very Act once included the Bermuda Electric Light Company Limited as a specified business. Electric supply was [a] specified commodity. The price of electricity has, 52 years later, emerged as a fundamental driver of the cost of living today.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda, though facing challenges reflected of a previous era, has evolved, and we have since built dedicated regulations for several of our essential services previously contemplated. We know that we have the Regulatory Authority, which is informed and does the appropriate oversight of the Electricity Act 2016.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments presented today honour the spirit of that architecture, but they name household utilities including electricity, telecommunications, and water among critical services. Using this Bill as a vehicle for transparency it requires the Commission to work with relevant stakeholders and regulators rather than around them. Where the laws conflict, the sectoral legislation stands firm, except for the duty to collaborate with the Commission, which is a key feature of transparency.

Fifty-two years later, Mr. Speaker, in response to the needs of the community, we are now restoring the elements of the original machinery, once successfully exercised [and] defended. But we are specifically modernising it to include critical goods and services, a frame with a strengthened architecture of transparency with other established regulators representing modern regulatory safeguards.

Mr. Speaker, though I hasten to dwell on the past, the record of 1974 and today tells a compelling story. It tells a story that for more than four decades the substance of this Act stood still while the needs of the people grew. Progress under this Administration began in 2017 when this Government raised the penalties for non-compliance to \$5,000 with daily default fines, and replaced the name of Price Control Commission with the Cost of Living Commission.

The second came in 2020 when this Government created the public price database for essential commodities brought into force on 17 June 2022 and given effect by the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Regulations 2022. The same regulation that places this very bag of rice under oversight today alongside the flour, the bread, and the pasta that feed most families on our Island.

Mr. Speaker, in 2025 the Throne Speech pledged fair pricing and transparency measures. An Act that has slept for [a] generation has been awoken and put into action. But the Bill before this House today is the most substantial reform that this legislation has had since its formation.

Mr. Speaker, honesty underpins the work better than any accolade or triumph. We acknowledge that the Act, even as amended, remains imperfect, and its enforcement powers went ignored for years. For years, the Cost of Living Commission has chronicled its challenges in receiving compliance from sectoral participants in response to data requests even to this day. While its language of price control was written by a 1974 Parliament for a 1974 economy, the price oversight that is presented requires the Commission to

monitor, ask questions, and publish the findings. The market will continue to function and set its prices.

Mr. Speaker, Members should be aware that since the reconstitution of the Commission in 2025, Members have been candid, and they have accepted that affordability work is a process. This Bill represents a thoughtful acceptance that further steps will follow but only as the evidence directs.

Mr. Speaker, the Commission includes representation from across Bermuda, and Members should also know that around the Commission table the views have been forthright, and at times revealed frustration with the fact that the tools of the current Acts [fall] short of the public expectation.

In 2025, they were given a schedule of 33 essential goods. While families felt compounded pressures of bills, they confirmed that their current powers were just not enough. They said from the outset that affordability must mean more than the 33 essential goods, and asked for the data to understand the full picture, the evidence to form conclusions based on pricing trends, cost to importers, [and] operational expenses which all play a critical role in forming the cost on the shelf. The Commission accepts that this is a critical foundation to substantive recommendations, but they each must be made in an informed way in the public good. This Bill gives commissioners the tools propelled by a Government mission and mandate for care and unwavering dedication and determination.

Mr. Speaker, the Government is true to its values and has listened. And, while not traditional, has invited the Cost of Living Commission to co-create the basis of this reform. Since 2025, the decisions have moved step-by-step. Members will recall the Cost of Living Summit; the national surveys; the Affordable Bermuda Agenda published last year; the expanded list of commodities in the 2026/27 budget; the Affordable Bermuda Basket, the partnership with retailers and wholesalers—legislative enhancements that were always intended to move in parallel for the nine months.

Today this marks another step to deliver on the foundation, reinvigorating oversight. The Commission has asked to be empowered to influence and to be given the data that reflects the commitment that they have to make a true impact on the cost of living in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, let me place on the record why this Government is clear-eyed on what is needed in support of the public. When we began this journey in 2025, we heard from residents, and we heard from businesses who wanted us to both understand their operations and their concerns. They were clear in what they wanted from the Government. This summit revealed that the public wished to see the zero rate of duty moved to more essential goods and medications. They wanted to require transparency so that every dollar of relief reaches the customers at the register, the partnerships with private sector, and collaboration ensuring that we would hold the partnership to account.

Shipping cost would be addressed and/or subsidised. Cap electricity rates and internet charges. Introduce tiered rates of all utilities. Protect low-income households. And welcome new importers so that no single supplier holds a family's basket.

More than 300 recommendations reached the Ministry and were refined with stakeholders through the summer of 2025. And the summit that has convened was just a catalyst for transparent, coordinated action. Industry was invited to join, and some did. The public also told what they wanted from us in return: practical action-orientated outcomes, clear solutions, real data, and a Government that would be engaged with the costs and pressures that residents faced.

Mr. Speaker, reflecting on this year's budget, we have now successfully delivered the deepest duty relief on essential goods of 198 tariff amendments effective from April 2026, an estimate of \$4.6 million in annual duty foregone across \$50.7 million of imports. But Mr. Speaker, what we know is that duty cut, though representing relief, is only relief if it is also felt at the register. As it stands today, no law on our books lets the Government confirm that a dollar of duty foregone becomes a dollar saved on the shelf. The ethos that this Government must reestablish, as done in 1974, is to trust but also verify. The Bill presented in this Honourable House answers the questions of who on behalf of the people is checking to make sure.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda does not walk this road alone, and it is prudent for Members to also understand that we will not be the first jurisdiction to advance measures of this nature. The Bahamas operates statutory price control on a defined breadbasket of essentials, and widened that list in 2022 when inflation hit hardest. Jamaica's Consumer Affairs Commission publishes comparative grocery price surveys so families can see who charges what.

The United Kingdom has kept a statutory adjudicator over its supermarkets since 2013, and in 2023 its Competition and Markets Authority examined grocery pricing and asked whether the falling costs were indeed reaching the shelf. New Zealand answered a concentrated island grocery market with the dedicated grocery commissioner and an annual public report. Australia has made its Food and Grocery Code of Conduct mandatory.

None of those administrations have torn that machinery down to this date. But set beside them is the Bill before this House, which we would argue is the measured cousin. Our neighbours cap prices by law. But this Bill is asking for a notice to inform the public, and it also begins with an empty schedule. I anticipate, Mr. Speaker, that arguments from this framework will speak to suggest that this goes further. But what it is seeking to do is to shine the light where nobody has been watching.

The Regulatory Authority watches energy and communications. The Bermuda Monetary Authority watches our banks and our insurers. Environmental

health officers walk every commercial kitchen on this Island. Yet from the dock through the warehouse to the shelf for goods that every family buys for their dignity, no regulator knows exactly what the costs are, a watchman at a gate that has stood unguarded. And costs are real. At the end of the day the evidence will show that they are real. And the public will finally see how their dollars are spent and the chains that sit. They will also appreciate operational expenses that are present and real within our major retailers and wholesalers.

Mr. Speaker, this Island knows better than most places on earth that strong oversight and a thriving market live together. No industry in Bermuda is more closely supervised than international insurance, and no industry has brought Bermuda greater success. The Bermuda Monetary Authority's standards are recognised as equivalent in Europe and respected in the United States. And the world's insurers choose Bermuda because the supervision adds value. Oversight well done is the reputation a market trades on. The businesses that feed this Island deserve a framework that they could rely on and also have comfort from, and so do the families that they serve.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments before this House are aligned to the regulations seen in many sectors and make principled reforms. It is establishing the designation of critical services linking this very bag of rice across its way to the table, which can now be seen transparently. Each critical service designation requires consultation with the Commission and any responsible sector regulator. And every designation comes to the legislature for approval under an affirmative resolution procedure.

Businesses on the Second Schedule must give the Commission written notice of such increases before they take effect. An essential commodity enters only where it is considered necessary in the public interest after consulting the Commission, and only by an Order that this legislature approves. Prescribed categories of businesses such as grocery stores . . . So that obligations fall evenly across the sector, and no single merchant is singled out, the Commission will monitor, question, and publish. And for a commodity that is on the Schedule, the Act remains a machinery of Part II and notified of increases including the powers of the Commission under section 4 retaining the right of an appeal. The safeguards that sit in section 7(1A) and 7(1B), the public interest test consultation with the Commission and the approval of the Legislature, provide sunlight into sectors that for too long have been in darkness.

The Bill recognises that our market is actually built where one company or one related business carries two or more links in a supply chain from freight, to wholesale, to retail. The Minister may have regard to that concentration when designating a critical service. Related companies are those sharing common ownership control, or directors, or otherwise significant commercial relationships. Mr. Speaker, scale cannot be ignored and is a material fact of living on an Island. A

prudent Government recognises that concentration without scrutiny leads to uninformed governance, duplicate processes, and unsubstantiated decisions or conclusions.

The Bill directs attentions to duty relief, and when the Government reduces duty on essential goods, families deserve to see that that relief has reached the register. And the Government must know that its fiscal sacrifices have not occurred in vain. Mr. Speaker, the Commission may now enquire into whether duty reductions or other cost reliefs granted on a scheduled commodity are passed through to the prices consumers pay. And the Commission's annual report will assess the effect of that relief across essential commodities. This Honourable House and the public should be able to take comfort knowing that the \$4.6 million of relief in this year's budget will be stewarded, and it will be stewarded well.

The Bill requires the Commission to lay the annual report before the Legislature, and that report will regularly demonstrate the hard work advanced by the Cost of Living Commission by including its findings on affordability indicators, pricing trends and market structures, the effect of duty reductions, and other reliefs and also barriers to competition.

The Bill writes cooperation into law recognising the value, Mr. Speaker, of information sharing and dismantling the flawed silos of structures. The amendments ensure that the Commission consults the regulator responsible for any sector that it examines, adding capacity and demonstrating joined-up governance. The Commission is therefore empowered to conduct joint market studies with those regulators. Importantly, confidential information that is held by other regulators remains protected. This results in a framework that removes duplication and closes the gap currently present between regulators.

The Bill provides fair and proportionate enforcement ensuring that a business aggrieved by a decision of the Commission has a right to appeal to the Minister, and from the Minister's decision to the Supreme Court, which may remit the matter for further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, as what can be forecasted as the routine response, the Bill has written answers within its own text. The replaced Second Schedule commences empty, exactly as a Schedule it replaces has stood since 2009. No businesses face price oversites on a day that this Act takes effect, but rather oversight engages only where a designation has been consulted on, brought to the Legislature, and duly approved by the elected representatives of this House. Notice, due process, and the right to appeal remain with the Supreme Court and run through the architecture of these amendments. A family that can compare prices across every shelf on this Island holds more choice in its hands.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I wish to speak directly to the countless families who have asked for this

Administration to be unwavering in its effort to lower the cost of living. The amendments presented today mean three important things:

- 1) The structures that set the price of rice, of bread, of the light bill, and the phone bill will operate and have oversight transparently and in plain sight.
- 2) When duty revenue is sacrificed and cut by this Government or by any successive Government, the Commission's role is to monitor and report on the impact it has on families. And when the price of essential items on the Schedule rises, that increase will be notified and examined and explained to the people.
- 3) Every year a report laid before this Legislature requires transparency and will show that the Commission found what steps it took. That accountability is now written into the letter of the law itself.

Mr. Speaker, affordability is a key feature of living in Bermuda with dignity, and it underpins our quality of life. As Minister and as a representative of the people, I have provided a framework to act on—what the people have requested. The concern for affordability has been raised time and time again in this House, and the constituents of every Member represented in this House feel it. I invite Honourable Members to examine this Bill and its merits and to support legislation that offers no silver bullet, but delivers the very answers requested on doorsteps that demand change as loudly as it does for us.

Mr. Speaker, when I leave the Chamber, this very bag of rice and the price that is attached to it come under a framework of more informed and more accountable governance. The arc of this work runs from listening, to legislating, and ultimately to delivering. The listening [is] filled with the Cost of Living Summit and the public's responses to surveys. It evidences tangibly the actions taken that began on a doorstep conversation that will be felt at kitchen tables. The reforms that began in 2017, deepened in 2020 and 2022, are now strengthened by the work of a responsible Government that is responsive to the people that it has pledged to serve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Robinson?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the intent of this Bill, because it is very important that all of us are united in attempting to make the cost of living easier for Bermudians. So, in that regard, we do definitely understand where the spirit of this legislation is.

The unfortunate part is that when you look at . . . certainly, even given the Minister's example of a

certain bag of rice, we have grocers who now bring in tiered-price products, where you could have a ShopRite bag of rice that is cheaper than the Uncle Ben's bag of rice. And this is how Bermudians have been shopping for very long, being able to find cost savings within the structure that we have, not excusing the fact that obviously a business must make a profit.

But the main crux of this particular legislation that is a sticking point is, number one, it is a short jump from price controls. It allows the Minister to potentially . . . "The Minister may," as it says, intercept or change the percentage of a pay rise if it is over 5 per cent.

Now this takes away the flexibility and operational requirement of a business to respond to their cost of business. And because we are, at the end of day, looking to represent the consumer—we are looking to represent our constituents—we have to understand that if we remove the flexibility, or at the least even infringe on that flexibility for businesses to respond to their cost of living, that in itself will harm the consumer because, as we know, whatever cost is incurred by the business will pass on to the consumer. That is just the facts of life.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Point of information.

The Speaker: Would you like to make a point of information?

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I do appreciate the Honourable Member in his contribution accepting the spirit of the legislation. I do believe that he has understood the provision of a 5 per cent increase incorrectly. It is actually a notice. So, a notice, therefore providing the public with forewarning in advance of them arriving at the grocery store and seeing that the price has suddenly jumped exponentially.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Member.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It also has a piece in there that says it can . . . that percentage can also be altered by a Minister. So, it is . . . the . . . the main point is that, yes, it does say that. But we will move on.

The main point is that I was here in 2020 in another place when we debated the first part of this legislation, another amendment that was similar to this legislation. And assurances were given on the floor of that other place that these particular provisions would not be brought into place under this Government. And I

recall that Senate debate in another place where the operational realities were brought forward. And at that time the Government team accepted that and said that there will be no price controls. There will be none of these mentions of what you are speaking about when it comes to trying to cap or interfere in the pricing of a business.

So, this will cause increased administrative burden, increased regulatory burden on a business that is operating within Bermuda within these sectors, that, inadvertently, will be passed on to the . . . to the consumer rather . . . again, whether we like it or not.

And I believe that in our quest to lower costs . . . and we try to force them down in a way that does not align with how our economy works, we can cause an adverse effect where, because [you] cannot charge, or because [you] are timid to charge, or whatever phraseology is being used right now, you can end up [causing] the business to begin to cut costs, or begin to seek to look for a lesser variety of goods because it no longer is feasible for them to bring them in. And so, what you have done is given the consumer less variety.

And we all know that if costs become exponential, there is one controllable outcome. There is one controllable cost that every business has, and that is staff. You cannot . . . you cannot control your BELCO bill, per se. You cannot control your electricity. But what you will see is that if folks feel as though this legislation inhibits their ability to be flexible with the price and to respond to costs of business, they may just cause potential layoffs.

And so, if a business is straddled with that amount of additional red tape, we may see an adverse effect for the consumer—

An Hon. Member: I hope you have come with a solution.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, it is a good thing—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh, no. I am glad that . . . I am glad that the Minister asked for solutions.

So that moves me to my next point. I believe that the Minister will get more bang for her buck, in a sense, [with] legislation using anti-monopoly laws, bringing forward competition. That is something that I think we have seen, a consolidation in these areas. Once you bring in anti-monopoly laws where a business now is subject to not being able to consolidate in a certain sector, you will find more competition, which will cause a decrease in costs because people will be now competing for business.

Right now, what we are seeing in multiple sectors is a monopoly, an effective monopoly. So, you are seeing it obviously in our energy sector, in grocery, in health care, these consolidations of large entities within our economy. And by attempting to price control them

you are missing the key aspect, that you are disproportionately tackling smaller entities that cannot spread their cost, that cannot take on an additional regulatory burden, and creating an additional hurdle for the new businesses who might wish to compete or break up or go toe-to-toe with these monopolies. When you have more than 10 stores, [you] can spread that regulatory cost. But what about small entities that are in this industry that have to do these same requirements?

And so, I [will] just ask the Minister a few questions: What was the feedback that she received from consultation with the entities that are being affected by this legislation? Did they flag any potential issues that they may face adhering to this legislation? Was there an impact assessment done to show whether or not this could inadvertently cause an increase in cost for the consumer, for our constituents?

And these are the things that I have been listening out for because as we have spoken to some of the entities that are affected by this legislation . . . And they are quite scared, point-blank, because they feel as though this is going to be a heavy hand on them and stop competition and allow even more large entities to continue to consolidate the market.

We believe that it is the Government's responsibility to foster an environment that encourages entrepreneurship, that aids with the cost of doing business so that there are jobs and opportunities for Bermudians within this economy. Now I know I am not the only one who hears about the cost of doing business in Bermuda and how that affects especially in the food sector, in the grocery sector and—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And this is . . . and this is a fundamental mistake that we make in this House as well, when it comes to separating the cost of living from the cost of business.

The cost of business is the cost of living because you are . . . the people . . . The people who are going to consume these goods, consume these services, if [the] cost of doing business was lower, that business should charge less, which will in turn help the consumer. If you have only so many places where you can purchase your bag of rice, because there is only one company selling a bag of rice, or if you only have so many places where you can get your health insurance from, and whatever premium you get is what you get, that is the crux of our issue in this society as we speak now. And that is why I am saying if you went the other way, which is anti-monopoly, I think that you could achieve the goal that you are looking for with this legislation.

It also speaks to the fact that most private sector . . . any private sector, regardless of which Government it is, is nervous when a Minister is giving themselves a certain amount of authority to ask for data to . . . to . . . to get into their business. Because what

happens is whenever a Bermudian who seeks to start a business, or whenever [a] Bermudian is looking to get their prices brought down, they are not looking for their fellow Bermudians to be laid off in order to get a cheaper loaf of bread. I am sure Bermudians would want fellow Bermudians to stay working, as they are employed, and see their cost of living brought down.

Mr. Dennis Lister III Mr. Speaker? Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And just to the ending Member, I think he is overlooking that there is also duty relief.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Misleading [the] House, Mr. Speaker. Yes.

The part of this legislation allows for the duty relief on essential goods. So, if we are giving relief to the grocer, or the entity, the expectation is that that relief is then passed on to the consumer. So, I hear what you are saying, but they are getting a relief.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: Say that again.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: That is on the grocer when they have relief.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Go ahead, Member.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, speaking to that, there was a solution given at the Cost of Living Summit, which I listened to, which spoke to non-stickered fruit and how that would potentially reduce 20 [per cent] to 40 per cent of fruit imports. So, there have been solutions that are given by the grocers, by many other people. And so, the whole point of duty relief passing on to the customer . . . I would say that you do see some of that passed on. But obviously it needs to be in a more structured way, whereas you do not have a consolidation of power or consolidation of purchasing power with a specific entity. And so, I think that we are not necessarily tackling the issue that we need to be tackling here.

In our efforts to lower costs, we cannot unintentionally harm our constituents and consumers. Potential job loss, less variety, reduced services, and

more barriers to compete with larger businesses is hurting our constituents. We cannot simply ignore the cost of business when we are talking about the cost of living, because both must be balanced. We all want cheaper goods for our citizens. But we do not want to compromise the level of service, the level of goods, the level of employment that—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, it is very interesting that one of the Members here is seeking to be premier. And eventually when he is premier, hopefully he will have to understand that cost of business is crucial. And I hope that he is singing that same tune from that side of the House, if he is successful in his election. But you have to weigh both things.

And so, with that, I will leave it to the floor, and I will allow that Minister his 20 minutes if he chooses to get up and let the people of Bermuda know that—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I will say that leader. I will leave it there.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Would any other Member like to make a contribution at this time?

Minister Darrell.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, I would just like to say that while there was a time when the Honourable Member from the other side was the Shadow for the ministries that I was responsible for, I can say, Mr. Speaker, that I have never seen him get on his feet and try to waffle and complicate a simple issue so eloquently.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I would not say waffle. I would not say waffle. Remember, we are trying to be protective of—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will reel it back a little bit—

The Speaker: He expressed his viewpoint and his opinion.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. I will . . .

I will come back, and I will I will go back to a simple story that most of us are familiar with. And that is an issue of actually canvassing. Because if you do not canvas, you do not go out into the streets, you do not talk to individuals, then there is no way that all of us in this House can possibly be here.

Mr. Speaker, most of the time (and I think most of us will attest to this) when you are speaking to people, a lot of the times the individuals who want to talk to

you the most are the ones who are struggling the most. Many times, when you go to people, many people say: *Nope, everything's cool. If I need you, I will call you.* But the ones who are truly struggling, Mr. Speaker, [are] the ones who take up, as we say, the most of our time when we are speaking to them and canvassing.

And for a long time, Mr. Speaker, the number one issue that all of us have heard was that individuals cannot keep money in their pockets. And Mr. Speaker, when you say, *Well, these are the things that the Government has done to keep more money in your pocket.* Some of the things that they say are: *Well, that's great and we applaud you Government. But there are other factors at play that you're doing something with your right hand and on the left hand other factors are happening, and the prices are not going down. They are essentially going up.*

So, I heard the Honourable Member from the other side use this slogan in his presentation quite a bit. He kept speaking of my honourable colleague, the Minister of Home Affairs, [by saying], *I do not think that this Bill seeks what she is trying to achieve.* And the reason why I said, Mr. Speaker, when I started, that I felt that he was complicating the issue is because the individuals whom I talk to, the individuals whom I serve in constituency 15, make it very clear. The cost of goods, the cost of living, is far too expensive.

And what my colleague said earlier in her presentation was that sometimes they feel that despite everything that is being done, it does not seem like it is quite enough.

In her presentation, Mr. Speaker, my honourable colleague said, *We must do more.* And that is what we hear, Mr. Speaker, when we are communicating and we are going to the houses of the individuals who may be struggling to put food on their tables. What the Honourable [Minister], my colleague, said is that in bringing this legislation we can finally have our constituents look at us, know what we are doing, and trust that it is actually going to do what it is intended to do. We are actually going to be able, as my honourable colleague said, as she came with her bag of rice, a big bag of rice . . . be able to hold up that bag of rice and be able to verify that the measures that this Government has put in place are actually being passed on to the consumer.

This is about empowerment, Mr. Speaker, because far too many times . . . and many of us as Ministers will look into our shops and we will say: *Well, we have these policies, and we have these plans. And we are going to write these Bills. I am going to change these laws and make these amendments,* and then we run into a roadblock. So, I am glad that the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs is bringing this forward so that we are empowering the Commission to be able to go around, through those roadblocks so that the objective is met. And that is simply to lower prices and allow people to live comfortably with some dignity, Mr. Speaker.

So, while I can appreciate that the Honourable Member from the other side got up and the what-if and the how-about and the maybe what-have-you and all of that, the bottom line is that the individuals whom I serve, Mr. Speaker, in Pembroke East constituency 15, want to know that if the bag of rice is \$5.00 and the Government is putting measures in place to make it cheaper, then next week the bag of rice is not going to be \$6.25. That is all that matters to them, Mr. Speaker.

And I will say this: This Government has a record of standing for the people. I do not have to go too far back because everyone knows that we have won three elections in a row. So clearly the people have a trust and an understanding that this Government will do what is in the best interest of them. Putting Bermudians first, Mr. Speaker. And when I say Bermudians, it is like: *What Bermudians? What does that mean?* It means the individuals who we serve—bottom line, point blank, period, simple.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, to take these measures and to make these changes, as we know, takes strong leadership. I commend the Honourable Minister of Home Affairs for the leadership. We have seen the videos. We have seen the consultation. We have seen it going wrong. But if she has to get to the point where additional measures have to be [taken] so that the individuals we serve can trust and verify what the Government is doing, that is strong leadership, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Honourable Member from the other side was speaking for maybe his base. Maybe.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: However—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: I said maybe—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. Yes.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order. The Minister is imputing improper motive. I do not accept a *maybe*.

You did not have to say it at all.

I ask that he retract it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Let me, Mr. Speaker. Let me take that off the record. Let me . . . Let me . . . You can take the *maybe* off the record. Let me make a bolder statement, Mr. Speaker.

The bolder statement is that this Government comes to create a fairer Bermuda for all. I can tell you, uncategorically, that there were no *maybes* there.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, Mr. Speaker, while my Honourable Member from the other side has come clearly with his points and . . . and . . . and the what-ifs and . . . and . . . and the what-have-you . . . did as money, I can say that what this Minister is doing with this Bill definitely is achieving what she and this Government have set out to do. And that is to lower prices in this country to make Bermuda fairer, and to work on behalf of the people.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to be up much longer, but I hope that the individuals who are listening today, whom I serve, will know that when I come on their doorstep this weekend, next week, the weekend after that, I can come with evidence that that, hey, that bag of rice that was \$5.00 will not be \$6.25 tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP Smith, would you like to make your contribution at this time?

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

I just want to say I agree with the Honourable Minister's comment that . . . that—

[Desk thumping]

Ms. Linda Smith: —this is a simple issue. It is a simple issue to articulate; it is a very difficult and complicated issue to solve.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

Ms. Linda Smith: This Commission and this legislation lay on board another layer of bureaucracy that costs money. And when you have commissions, when you have inspectors, when you have agencies, it brings forth a lot more expenses with respect to the administration of those, the adjudication of those, the staffing of those.

Regulation costs money. Just take a look at . . . you know, we get charged regulatory fees for our telecommunications. We get charged regulatory fees for our BELCO bill. We have a gaming commission that we all pay for somehow. And we do not seem to get any revenue from that, but that is another story.

But here we have another Commission, and we do not know what the cost of this Commission is going to be. And we do not know how much it is going to cost the community. And we do not know what the effect is going to be. And we do not know how the merchants are going to react to it. And so, there are a lot of

questions around how this is going to be implemented and what it is going to mean. And what are the afterthoughts or the after responses going to be in terms of the selections that we have, the supply chains that we have, the jobs that people may lose if the cutbacks come and they start cutting back on people?

So, I am not, you know . . . I looked at the legislation, and I am just not getting a sense of how all these things connect. And it is a very complicated topic.

Now I agree with my colleague that one thing that could be looked at (and I think that it is low-hanging fruit, quite frankly, at this point) is looking at doing something with respect to the monopolies and creating more competition. My concern with this legislation is also that instead of creating more competition and movement for entrepreneurs to maybe get into that market and create more competition, it is going to create more administration and more bureaucracy and turn people off in terms of what it is going to take to set up a business, and particularly a grocery business.

The other things that can be done that would help to reduce costs right off the bat would be things like eliminating the sugar tax, changing the timing of duty so that it is paid after sales, reducing the foreign currency purchase tax, and just reducing red tape within government itself.

But certainly, it is a monopoly situation that we have with respect to the grocery stores at the moment. And we see that happening in insurance and in other businesses that affect our cost of living. And so that would definitely be some low-hanging fruit for Government to, you know . . . for Government to tackle.

This seems very punitive. It seems very heavy-handed. It seems like it will create more issues than it will solve. And I just do not see how it all patches together to take us where we want to be. So, I have a lot of questions. They are not answered in the legislation, and I am just not seeing how this is going to work.

Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Speaker: Thank you.

Honourable Members, before I recognise any other Member, I believe that is Opposition Senator [Tarik] Smith in the Gallery, just to acknowledge that he is present. Yes.

[Does] any other Member wish to speak?

MP Lister, you have your time on the floor.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to follow in the vein of my colleague, Minister Darrell, Mr. Speaker. I was out canvassing yesterday, and in one of the houses I stopped in I actually was there for maybe about 20, 25, 30 minutes with this constituent. And she gave a list of her complaints: health insurance, groceries, cost of living. And after she

went through it, Mr. Speaker, she asked, "What is Government going to do?"

So, Mr. Speaker, I told her. Government . . . we . . . what we are doing is reducing the duty, and also on some goods getting rid of duty altogether. That is what we can do, Mr. Speaker, to help reduce the cost of groceries in the store, especially essential items, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with your leave, I would like to refer to the Budget Statement.

The Speaker: All right. [Keep it] short.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: [On] page 25, Mr. Speaker, [under] Essential Goods Duty Reduction, I quote out of it, Mr. Speaker. "To support the Affordable Bermuda Agenda, spearheaded by the Honourable Member, the Minister for Home Affairs, this Government will reduce or eliminate duty rates on a wider range of essential goods. These include everyday household hygiene and cleaning products, infant nutrition and care items, core dairy products, bakery goods, grains, pan-try staples, selected meats, and fresh produce. These are the basics that families purchase week after week, and this measure is designed to ease pressure at [the] checkout counter and make a practical difference in the cost of living for Bermudian households."

Mr. Speaker, I will go further to say that the Minister said this list has been expanded. So, this is what Government is doing.

Another situation, Mr. Speaker, this past week I had a friend (he moved out of Bermuda over 10 years ago) come back home this week. We were hanging out. He said he went to the grocery store, Mr. Speaker. He said they spent maybe a hundred dollars for five items. And he looked at me, and I said . . . *You know, unfortunately, this is the price of goods in Bermuda now since you left.* But then I said, *This is what Government is trying to do.*

The people, as Member Robinson said, the constituents, the public . . . they are calling out for something to happen. So, this is what Government is doing with our control, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we should not let perfect be the enemy of good. Well, we should not let us be afraid to try because you know it is not going to be perfect. No, Mr. Speaker, let's do what we can to help. When I go and knock on doors next week to tell the constituents that this is what we are doing, that is what they want to hear, Mr. Speaker. They do not want to hear: *Well, we can't do it because businesses, you know, they are not going to like it. Businesses, you know, there is more work for businesses to do.* Mr. Speaker, the everyday consumer does not want to hear that. They want to hear what Government is doing. What are we doing to address the cost of living, the cost of groceries, and high cost of living, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, further to that, it was raised by Member Robinson in regard to anti-merger

monopolies, but Mr. Speaker, that is a new, you know, revelation in Bermuda, maybe since COVID-19 in the last—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It has been for maybe five or six years. [INAUDIBLE] merger [INAUDIBLE].

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, that is a more recent situation where we are seeing mergers of businesses. The high cost of groceries has been going on longer than that, Mr. Speaker. So, let's address the cost of living. A by-product could be the anti-merger anti-monopoly legislation. But the high cost was happening before these mergers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, and . . . and . . . you know, much has been said, and I do not want to belabour it because I think the overall point is that we are doing as Government what we can to help reduce the cost of staple goods, services, utilities, [and] things like that, Mr. Speaker.

But I do want to end just on this one point, Mr. Speaker. This last month has been the [FIFA] World Cup. I know most of us up here have been watching the World Cup, you know, whether your team was in, made it to the final, or not. But [there is] one thing, Mr. Speaker, because I usually do not watch local TV channels. It is either streaming or, you know, Netflix and things like that. But what I have noticed, Mr. Speaker, is that during the commercial breaks, the hydration break, the halftime break, there is a commercial that comes on. I cannot remember the exact entity, but it is a Bermuda commercial that shows how we . . . I want to say it may be the grocers, where they show the track of when the produce is grown and purchased in California, it travels across the East Coast, then it is shipped to Bermuda. They actually went out of the way . . . not . . . they did not go into minute detail. But they actually went out of the way to sort of show the transparency of how we got our costs in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

So, I say that to say because this legislation gives powers to the Commission to find out how entities get their costs. If we as a Government are reducing duty for staple goods, why is that not being passed on to the consumer? So, this gives further investigative powers to get transparency of costs. I think that is key. It is transparency of costs. Why does a bag of rice cost six, seven, eight dollars? Let's look at what makes up that cost and how we can reduce that. And if we are reducing duty on these essential costs, we should see a reduction in the price of these items, Mr. Speaker.

So again, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments. We as Government have to do, and we are employed to do, what we can to help our everyday constituents that both sides . . . We [all] know, Mr. Speaker, there are constituents that struggle. And they ask, and they call for us to do something. So, this is what

Government is doing. And I support the Minister and the team at the Ministry of Home Affairs in these efforts to reduce our cost of goods or services that [are] essential for people to survive and live in Bermuda.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, those are my comments.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to—
MP King?

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

We are all in agreement with the spirit and intention of the legislation. Lowering costs for families? Absolutely. We all recognise that persons in this community are struggling just to feed themselves. The question is whether or not this legislation, as we are being asked to pass, is going to achieve the intended goal. I am fearful that it will not, not for lack of will but because of the way it is structured.

When a person goes into a grocery store, what they are faced with is many choices in terms of the name brands and other things. Perhaps if we adopted the same approach as pharmacies—prior to them becoming monopolies—where you can buy a generic version that may be duty-free, then the consumer would have more choices about healthy food at an affordable price.

The other problem that consumers face, especially those on limited budgets, is when you go to pay for the item, or when the item is being displayed, you just have a barcode. You don't know how much the item actually is. So, if there was legislation, perhaps, or an amendment, or some other mechanism in place where a person can see how much the item is going to cost before they get to the checkout and then have the embarrassment and humiliation, that might be helpful as well.

I know that some time ago there was talk about Government perhaps starting a co-op like we used to have before some of you here were alive. We used to have the co-op supermarket there on Union Street, which was where many families, mine included, used to shop because you get good quality products at a fair price. Might consideration also be given to encouraging the startup of a cooperative with agriculture, with the fishermen, with the farmers, et cetera, so that we can have food sustainability and security by promoting local cooperation in business ventures, which will help to offset the costs associated with monopoly businesses that currently exist?

As I said, we are all in agreement with the spirit and intention. What I am asking the current administration to do is to consider other ways where we can literally grow the business and make things better for all of us, not with further restrictions on the business providing services, but with an approach that is holistic and takes into consideration all variables.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Minister Adams, would you like to make a contribution?

Hon. Jache Adams: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to talk . . . I will not talk about him. There is nothing to say, but I do remember a time in a previous debate when the Honourable Member Fahy was here. And he said that they are the Opposition. Right? And so, they are not here to pat us on the back on every particular matter. And so, it is interesting that I think we understand the overall intent. But what I can also say is that I am not surprised by the Opposition that they have some level of opposition to this Bill that is being proposed—

An Hon. Member: Concern.

Hon. Jache Adams: —concern for . . .

What I am not a subscriber to, Mr. Speaker, is this level (and these are my words) of scaremongering, of the fact that, you know, with this Bill and with these pieces of legislation, all of a sudden, prices are going to rise, jobs are going to fall away. This is in my words, you know, scaremongering.

And it is interesting, because what was said earlier was the fact that there is a belief that added administration costs is a foregone conclusion, that it will be passed on to the consumer. Yet [you] have an opposition to a government that says, *If we provide duty relief for you, Mr. Business owner, we are putting policies in place to help ensure that those savings are passed on to the consumer.*

And so, Mr. Speaker, I then run into a space where I have heard Minister Darrell and Junior Minister Lister [III] talk about canvassing and the things that they hear when they are out on the doorsteps about the cost of living and shopping. But the reality, Mr. Speaker, is I see it myself. I do not even have to canvass to hear about the cost of grocery stores. Listen, every Tuesday, Mr. Speaker, I take my daughter and myself, and we typically go to the grocery store. And we—

An Hon. Member: Did you go on discount day?

Hon. Jache Adams: I missed it. I missed the discount day.

But every Tuesday, that is our day. She and I go up and down these aisles, and we seemingly every week put the same set of goods in the cart. You see? And I say this because she has to have her popsicles. She has to have her frozen fruit. She has to have a lemonade, her snacks, her cereal. And so, every week we pretty much put the same things . . . every . . . pretty much put the same things. And I know that I am no different from any other Bermudian. [We] sort of have our weekly traditions of what we do. And because of that, trust me when I tell you, I do not need any report to tell me that the cost of living is going up.

I see it every week at the grocery store. I get it when I get my BELCO bills. I even get it every once in a while when I try to do repairs on my home. It is going up.

So now, I also want to take this opportunity to say that the cost of living is not a recent issue. The cost of living in Bermuda is not a recent issue. The cost of living certainly did not come as a result of this Administration, nor would I say [it] is the result of the previous Administration. In fact, I remember quite clearly the Bermuda Industrial Union has been talking about the cost of living since the 1960s. But that is why I believe this Bill matters.

And so, I think the Minister quite rightly said that this will not solve everything overnight. This is no silver bullet. Truthfully, if it were easy, if it were an easy fix, somebody would have fixed it and figured it out a long time ago. But this Bill gives the country and its residents better tools to understand why prices are rising, gives them the tools to improve transparency. It gives them the tools to strengthen accountability where it matters most.

Mr. Speaker, when prices increase, consumers deserve to know why. And equally as important, they deserve to know that at the very least someone is asking why. And when Government provides duty relief to help families, those families deserve to know that that benefit reaches their pockets and [does] not improve the bottom lines of those businesses. That is what we are talking about here. That is the type of accountability that this Bill is designed to strengthen.

For example, when the Government reduces or eliminates import duty on items to help young families with the cost of raising children, naturally parents would expect to see lower prices when they walk into the store. But if that duty reduction never reaches the checkout, then the policy has not achieved its overall purpose.

So, what I am pleased to see with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is that it gives the Cost of Living Commission stronger powers. It gives them teeth, and I can attest that that is something that the Cost of Living Commission has been asking for for quite some time—the ability to examine whether those savings are actually being passed on to consumers. I think we are all in agreement with this.

Mr. Speaker, another feature of this Bill is that it expands the public price database. Now that may seem technical, but the idea is actually very simple. The more information consumers have, the better decisions they can make. And so, I wanted to also now take this opportunity to remind Members and the public of the Government's commitment in our 2025 election platform to launch a digital grocery price tracker to provide price comparisons of essential goods across major supermarkets promoting pricing transparency.

So, what we are getting towards and leading towards is yet another fulfilled Progressive Labour Party commitment. If a family can compare prices

before spending their hard-earned money, we believe that is a good thing. If they can better understand the fees and the surcharges and the service plans, that is a good thing. And if greater transparency encourages businesses to compete on price, as far as we are concerned as representatives of the people, that is also a good thing.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that every dollar matters. It matters to the young family buying groceries. It matters to the seniors on fixed incomes. It matters to the single parent balancing one bill against another. Again, that is why this Bill is important. That is why this Bill matters. They may not grab the headlines, but it strengthens the framework that helps Government understand why prices are rising, monitoring what is happening in the marketplace, and ensuring that consumers are treated fairly.

So, Mr. Speaker, I will simply close with this and say that the people of Bermuda work hard for every dollar that they earn. They deserve confidence that this Government is asking the right questions and is working towards building a fairer marketplace. And they deserve confidence that when action is taken to reduce the cost of living, those benefits are reaching the people they were intended to help.

And so, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support this Bill, and I encourage Honourable Members to do likewise.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP DeCouto, would you like to make a contribution?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, good evening, Mr. Speaker, and good evening to the listening audience.

I appreciated the remarks of the previous speaker because, you know, he acknowledged that all of us here . . . all of us here support *What can we do to reduce the cost of living?*

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Uh-huh.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We know that we are all on the streets and knocking on the doors, and we are meeting people, and we are all intimately aware of the issues facing Bermudian people. So, I was glad to hear that, because I know that sometimes there are Members on the other side who like to insinuate that they alone . . . *they alone*, Mr. Speaker, have constituents who can't buy groceries. And *they alone* have constituents who would think about leaving the country. But no; it is in all of the constituencies. Let's just start with that.

And you know, we have several crises here, Mr. Speaker. Four I think of. We have the education crisis. We have the health care crisis. We have the housing crisis. And we have the cost-of-living crisis.

And cost of living is really two different things. It is how much do things actually cost in the shop, and it is what do you have in your pocket. So, when you talk about how do I improve the cost-of-living situation for somebody, you have got a couple of levers. This Bill, and, in my view many of this Government's philosophies, are the first lever, which is how do we, like, try to chip away at the price at the shop? I am not necessarily opposed to that totally, per se. But I am going to get into why I don't support this Bill.

Of course, the other approach is how do we grow the amount that is in people's pockets. We know, Mr. Speaker, that the local economy, from all of the statistics, is flat. But the international business economy is growing. And we have heard a couple of times—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, maybe not for Island Construction, Mr. Speaker, because maybe they will get some government contracts. I don't know.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But we know, Mr. Speaker, that we hear about—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —the Two—

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We go about the—

The Speaker: You know, we were trying not to make personal comments back and forth because they lead us down a road.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: I am asking you not to take that tone.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, you are right.

The Speaker: Because you know where it is going to go. We had a good afternoon. Let's not lead us down the wrong way, please.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Let me retract that comment—

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —about a specific business—

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —because, of course, it's probably not appropriate to get into that level of—

The Speaker: Yes, you have got to try pull back. You have got to pull back. So,—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —granularity up here.

The Speaker: You don't have to work up—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I do—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He should apologise.

The Speaker: He is withdrawing his—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: He is withdrawing the statement. He is withdrawing the statement, and I am asking him to go in a different vein.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I was talking about—

The Speaker: Now, the statement has been withdrawn.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —the Two Bermudas, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: You see, he still hasn't apologised.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Two Bermudas. And the reason is . . . let's admit it: There are people working in a kind of parallel economy here where they . . . the cost of living is like a discussion topic. And there are people for whom the cost of living is like, *What do I have to take out of my car today? When I go to the pharmacy, what do I not get?*

So, I say all this to say that we really, really are all on board on the same . . . the same pitch here. And I talked about . . . we talk to lots of different people when we canvass. And some of those people are not that sensitive on the cost of living. Some are struggling hand-to-mouth. And some people are businesspeople. They are entrepreneurs; they are running Bermudian businesses, Mr. Speaker. And frankly, they have their own complaints as well. And a big struggle they have is the cost of doing business

They want to deliver quality goods and services to the Bermudian people. They want to build a sustainable business to support their families. They want to be part of making Bermudian society better. And they struggle with red tape. They struggle with roadblocks put in their way from Government.

You know, I . . . the Minister for Home Affairs used the phrase *trust but verify*.

Several Hon. Members: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: There are a lot of people out there, Mr. Speaker, who do not trust this Government.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: That is the reality. How do I know that?

[Inaudible interjections and general uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, let me rephrase that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: My experience is, especially people who are trying to do business, . . . they don't feel they can count on the Government to work efficiently and effectively for them. They find things put in their way. So, I found that interesting—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motives]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I believe the—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Intentionally—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —Shadow Minister is deliberately imputing improper motives on the Government.

I believe the record of this Government speaks for itself with regard to . . . and one of the best examples is the Fairmont Southampton Princess that will be open soon. If businesses didn't have confidence in this country (right?) they wouldn't be doing what they are doing at Elbow Beach, at The Loren. And if they didn't have confidence in this Government, Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous Government that reversed a contract . . . we . . .

An Hon. Member: This isn't a point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —respected the airport and the hotel deals. Notwithstanding the concern we raised. So, I think it is very disingenuous of them.

The Speaker: But what he was . . . what I was hoping you got to would have been a real point of order.

What you are expressing was your viewpoint versus his viewpoint. He said that *in his opinion* . . . he didn't state a fact. He didn't misuse a fact. He said *in his opinion*, this is what he saw, and when he talks to businesspeople. That was . . . I am not in that conversation with him. I didn't have the conversation with him, so we can't . . . If he had taken facts and twisted facts around, that is a different story. But he spoke to when he speaks to the businesspeople.

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

I might just make a little clarification. I actually didn't specify *businesspeople*, but there are people doing business . . . that could be a man on a bike with a bucket who is a plasterer. That could be a water truck driver—and I am going to get to that, Mr. Speaker. That could be someone trying to operate a food stall. And actually, that is primarily who I am talking about.

But I am glad the Member mentioned the hotel. Look, let's get down to brass tacks, Mr. Speaker. There is a lot of stuff in this Bill about transparency, providing information to people. That is great. You know, we could quibble about some details around that, but it is really second-order, because the main issue with this Bill is it creates price controls. No, ifs ands or buts.

The Minister can tell a business if it is allowed to raise its price or not, and how much. That is a price control. And anyone here who knows anything about what's going on down in Cuba, who knows what has been going down in Venezuela—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —and other of these countries where they are running price controls, knows what is going on down there. The shelves are empty. And if the Minister doesn't understand that I invite her to go up to the Southampton Princess project and speak to those Cubans working up there.

An Hon. Member: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

An Hon. Member: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is making people believe that the products on the shelves in Cuba and Venezuela have nothing to do with the sanctions, the international sanctions, that are on that country due to conflict.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Not because of price controls.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: The shortage does . . . has been impacted by the blockage. That is a given.
But go ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and there are many other examples around the world where price controls create shortage—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And let me actually give you another example about that.

The Minister of Home Affairs (a couple of Ministers spoke over there) tried to compare this price control regulation to industries such as insurance and electricity. Right, Mr. Speaker?

Now, interestingly, as you know, we have called for more regulation of the insurance industry in Bermuda including setting . . . not setting, having insurers' price rate changes reviewed. And I am going to explain to you why that is different from what is going on here.

So, number one, we have a monopoly situation here (basically) with the insurers. Right? Number two, it is a very technical area, but we have a very good regulator in the BMA, full of technical, competent people who understand the industry. Number three, there are well-understood processes internationally because this happens in most countries. There is a regulation of the insurance rate changes of how insurers can apply to raise the prices (I guess they can apply to lower them, too—although I am sure that is generally approved.), and the kind of information that they have to provide and that the people regulating them take into account. And sometimes the prices go up.

Now what happens . . . what happens when the regulators don't let prices go up when they need to go up? For those of you who are not familiar, this is what was happening in California. The major insurers all pulled out of certain classes of business. People could not buy wildfire insurance. There are areas where people cannot buy flood insurance. There are areas where people cannot buy earthquake insurance. And then the government has to step in and become the insurer.

So that is an example of where, when the regulators do not allow the appropriate price to be set, you have a shortage. So, I don't think the Minister's example of comparing this to things like insurance regulators and so forth is the right one, because her Ministry does not have the capacity and the kinds of experts and the whole infrastructure set up in the way that the BMA would have.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The BMA—which has hundreds of people hired internationally from around the world with deep technical experience and qualifications and actuarial work in insurance and so forth . . . and one of my prior comments actually spoke about what would it need to get this kind of thing set up. Because under this legislation the Minister determines whether a business can raise a price, if it feels it needs to raise the price, or not.

So, I guess I have a big question there. And I know we all would love to know: How will the Minister make that determination? Who will support her? Where will that information come from? (Right?) How will they guide that discussion process? What will the appeals process be? And so forth. Okay?

So, I have been talking about price controls.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Water truckers. I talked about the small businessperson, Mr. Speaker. If you are a water trucker out there your price will be subject to this, potentially. So, how about that? You are going to tell them how much to charge to deliver a load of water. I mean, I get the point. Water is an essential commodity. But there are a lot of things going on with the guy's truck, or the lady's truck. The maintenance of the truck, the cost of fuel, where they get the water from, and so forth. So, how is that going to go down with the water truckers, Mr. Speaker?

Now, I want to go back to the trust topic because as I said, in my view, a lot of people I speak with don't . . . are not trusting this Government—especially people in small business. And we had the CIT debate earlier. And I don't want to reflect on that, per se, but I want to use, as an example, where we in the Opposition are actually really pleased with how the Government has been consulting with the experts in the business, that whole sector, in a way that what comes out is well-crafted and has a lot of good feedback into it.

And some feedback that we have from various sectors that may be impacted by this legislation, which showed up a week ago, Mr. Speaker,—one week—is that this was like out of left field. This was not something they saw coming.

And let me talk about the price control aspect. And if you don't mind, my colleague, MP Robinson, did talk about it. But if you allow me to maybe quote from something from the ³[24] June 2020 Senate Hansard.

The Speaker: Brief quote.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Senator [Anthony] Richardson, "To clarify [that], it is not at all the role of the commission for price control—not at all."

³ [Official Hansard Report](#), 24 June 2020, p. 992

And then a second quote, "It is not a role at all. Price control is not a function at all of the Cost of Living Commission."

All right, well the Minister will probably say *No, the Commission won't. I am going to set the prices*. So maybe she can explain to us how that is going to work.

So, when we talk about the cost of doing business (right?) we want . . . we, in the OBA, we are looking for growth. Because if you want to take . . . cut some of the taxes, cut the duty . . . in many areas we want to see that done. But we have to admit that after a certain point in time it becomes diminishing returns. And that is what is going on with those approaches by this Government now.

What is not going on is finding ways to encourage growth of the economy, to put more money into people's pockets, and growth, and supporting of local business. In my opinion, and I don't want to get into debate on the Economic Development Strategy, but the statistics show that the local economy—the Government's own statistics—is essentially running flat. Okay? So, we had that.

And my colleague, [MP] Linda Smith, talked about some stuff the OBA would do that we think can address costs. And she talked about the sugar tax. I mean that could be done. I tell you what. Bring that on September [4th], Mr. Speaker. We are all for it.

We talked about ways to address the whole customs duty process for retailers. You know, simplify it. Take it away. Let them pay it after the fact, because cash flow is a really important thing for doing business. And the foreign currency purchase tax. Another idea that can support retailers in reducing costs is . . . there are retailers that supply goods that they essentially manufacture on the Island. And they are in competition with overseas companies. Let's say for kitchen cabinets . . . kitchen cabinets, Mr. Speaker. That's one. Why can't they buy the plywood (or whatever) at a duty-free rate, because they are doing the work and selling a finished product here? But they have to compete with cabinets from Florida. Right?

So, those are some ideas of . . . I know those aren't necessarily about the critical goods, but we are talking about cost of living here. And so, if you need to do a renovation of a small apartment, maybe the BHC would like some low-cost Bermudian-made cabinets to fit out its kitchens, for example. And then you would have a double whammy, Mr. Speaker. You would be supporting local business and getting a good deal on that housing for important Bermudians.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, we talked about . . . we have heard from some of my colleagues that, again, if they feel they are not allowed to set the prices how they need to set [them], they are going to move other levers. And we already heard about potential impacts on employment. But here is another one: If you [own] a store and you are pricing your goods and they say, *Hey this basket of goods* . . . which, by the way, we understand there could be thousands and thousands of items

that are going to be covered by these price controls. And I don't know how the Ministry is going to process all of that. You are going to raise the prices to make up your revenue on other items. So again, it is just going to leak over into the other things that people need to put into their baskets.

And then if they do have to cut the money that they are spending locally on suppliers or employees or whatever, that is going to be a further reduction of local economic activity, Mr. Speaker.

So again, as my colleagues have said, and as I have mentioned here, we are all on board with making the cost-of-living crisis better for Bermuda. But we offer a fundamentally different approach which, instead of trying to control and getting in the way of business, we want to enable businesses to be more creative. We want to get the red tape out of the way. We want to reduce the costs on them that they can then pass on to their customers. And I talked about why we like the transparency aspects of this. We want to get the local economy growing to put more money into people's pockets.

We have a lot of concerns about this Bill that I have mentioned and my colleagues have mentioned.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

MP Lawrence Scott, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, listening to the comments from the Opposition has made me think of what they call survivor's paradox. And I am glad that you asked what survivor's paradox is, Mr. Speaker, so that I could explain it not just to you but to the—

The Speaker: Go ahead. Go ahead. Go ahead.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: —to the listening audience as well.

So, survivor's paradox comes from the 1940s. Mr. Abraham Wald, a mathematician, was part of a statistical research group. And they were tasked with trying to determine where to reinforce the bombers, the aircraft that were dropping the bombs in the war, so that they could increase the survivability of aircraft coming back. And so therefore they could decrease the number of casualties and losses that the American forces were taking.

And Mr. Wald realised a fundamental flaw in what they were doing. They were looking at the aircraft that had returned from behind enemy lines. They were looking at aircraft that were able to return home and looking at where they had been shot and where they had been penetrated by ammunition. And they were starting to reinforce those areas. And Mr. Wald said, *Well, hold on. If the aircraft has taken damage in these*

areas and returned home, then do these areas really need to be reinforced? We should really be looking at the aircraft that do not make it home and seeing what actually brought that aircraft down.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I shared that because it seems as though the Opposition is focused on having the survivor's paradox. They are looking at what exists right now, right here, and not looking at what could be, what should be, looking at new ways to do things. And there is a common saying *If you keep doing what you have been doing, you are going to keep getting what you have been getting.*

And if you look in *Webster's Dictionary*, there are two words in the English language that have the exact same meaning. It is called insanity and stupidity, to repeat the same action and expect a different result. And so the Government is neither insane nor stupid. And so, therefore, we are looking at different ways of doing things.

Mr. Speaker, if you look at the current supply chain . . . And my Honourable Junior Minister spoke about the commercial that is on the TV where they show a head of lettuce that [comes] from California and is in refrigerated trucks and gets to New York and then gets the shipping route over to Bermuda, and all these added-on fees help to stimulate the economy and keep people in jobs and feed chefs and families. But, Mr. Speaker, what they do not tell you is that California is 3,080, 3,090 miles away. Is there no closer place to get a head of lettuce, Mr. Speaker? Could we not go down to a place in . . . I know there is going to be an uproar when I use this word because it seems to be the forbidden word over in the Opposition—the C word.

Could there not be a place in CARICOM, a country that is one of the CARICOM members, where we could actually source goods and agriculture and meats and other light manufactured items from? Because CARICOM is only 1,500 miles away, Mr. Speaker. Half the distance. Which would actually mean that, arguably, it should be half the price to get here. That means we are reducing what is called the middle mile.

But what we have also understood and what the Government understands is that the current local supply chain—and that is what I will call them, the local supply chain—decision-makers have fought against making new decisions. They spent so much time building their relationships where they are now that they do not want to have to build new relationships. They do not want to have to look in new ways. They want to continue to do what they have been doing so that they can just pass on the expense to the consumer and then blame the Government.

And how do I know that they want to do what they have been doing and then blame the Government? Because the Government gave them a test.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: So, we get . . . we put . . . we passed the sugar tax, and every price went up in the country. But we have also passed duty relief, Mr. Speaker. And yet, we have not seen any dramatic or significant change in price to reflect the duty relief that they have gotten, which would reflect trickle-down economics, Mr. Speaker. That is what the Opposition has been talking about, trickle-down economics, which was a philosophy that was used in the 1930s—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Member, enthusiastic though he may be, is misleading the House. No one over here has talked about trickle-down economics.

And while I am on my feet, Halifax is half the distance. It is 871 miles.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I do not know that they can grow lettuce in Halifax, but that is a different story.

But Mr. Speaker, trickle-down economics, let me explain. If the Honourable Member would have let me explain—

The Speaker: His point of order is that they are not referring to trickle-down economics.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Oh, no, well [it was] the concept. They might not have used the term, but they are saying if the Government was able to do things that helped reduce the price to the business owners, they could pass—

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. No one on this side of the aisle is advocating trickle-down economics. And I am well aware of what it means.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Remember, we clarified that the Member is not . . . We said what you were referring to, but he just wants to give an explanation for it.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: The concept that I have heard and the way that I have interpreted what the Honourable Members on the other side have said, talking about if the Government, was to find ways to be able to reduce the cost of living for . . . No, not the cost of living, but the cost of doing business for the business owners

here in Bermuda. They could then pass that on to the consumer. That is my interpretation, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Member is again misleading the House. The examples on how to lower costs that were given by this side include getting rid of the sugar tax. That is not in any way trickle-down economics.

Thank you.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, they are saying that if we reduce . . . if we removed the tax they would pass that savings on to the customer. That is exactly what I just explained, Mr. Speaker.

That is exactly what I just explained, that if businesses got their operating costs reduced, they would pass it on to the customer. And then I also showed where that has actually happened where the Government ended up doing their part of the deal, removing the duties, but that was not passed on to the customer. But I will move on, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I will go on to looking at things in a new light because, despite the fact that we have Bermuda-based companies like [the] bank of Butterfield, Coralisle Group Ltd., otherwise known as CG (formerly known as Gibbons Company), and Deloitte, who are Bermuda-based companies that do business in CARICOM, and in CARICOM regions, the Opposition would tell you that, no, we should not go down there. There is nothing to be had down there, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

I am [afraid] the exuberant MP is again misleading the House. No one has said we should not go down there. Indeed, examples have been given of businesses that are already there.

Thank you.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: I am glad he was listening because I did give the examples of the businesses that were already down there, and doing very well. And so therefore, the Government . . . Why would the Government not take that example, take a page out of their book, and go down there and build stronger ties there so that we could turn them into trade routes, which means that we can bring in products for lower prices and thus help reduce the cost of living?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so, Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that Honourable Members on the other side said that I could put that on my plane.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Let's not try to make it personal even in a light manner because it may go the wrong way.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Mr. Speaker, what I want to show is that there is \$11 billion of exports coming from the CARICOM region going to the United States every year.

Bermuda averages roughly about a billion dollars of imports from the United States to Bermuda. Are you not telling me that the current local supply chain cannot find a way to tap into an \$11 billion export industry? And that they cannot find a way to put a ship on from the CARICOM or Caribbean region to Bermuda in order to help bring down the cost of living?

And so, because they have had ample opportunity, ample time, the Government is now saying that if you will not do it on your own, we are going to *encourage* you to do it. We are going to *motivate* you to do it.

And Members on the other side want to say the word *force*. But then, Mr. Speaker, if the Government sat back and did nothing, the Members on the other side would say you should do something. And so now that we are doing something, they are saying that it is not the right thing to do. But when they had the opportunity, they did nothing.

Some Hon. Members: Ooh!

[Cross talk]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so Mr.—

The Speaker: Okay. We will say that is your opinion that they have done nothing, but—

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: That is my opinion. But also Mr. Speaker, I notice . . . I—

The Speaker: [INAUDIBLE] jumping up and down.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so Mr. Speaker, the point that I am getting at is that if we continue to suffer from survivor's paradox, we will continue to have the increase in the cost of living because it is obvious that the private sector is going to focus on their bottom line. And I am not insinuating or implying that there is anything wrong with that. Business is business. But the Government's business is to look at the quality of life of those persons that live in this country and to create an environment where that quality of life can be achieved by everyone. And so, therefore, what we have to do is do

something different. Look at other avenues. Look at other levers. Make the tough decisions.

Mr. Speaker, one piece of advice that my father gave me before I got into politics in 2012, he said, *You know that not everyone is going to like you for the decisions that you have to make.* And I responded to him saying that an ice cream salesman has enemies because there are those that are lactose intolerant. There are those that don't like certain flavours. So, if people cannot be happy with an ice cream salesman, then I am fine with people not liking me as a politician when we are making the decisions that need to be made so that they can have a better choice, that they can have a better life. They can have better quality of life at that, Mr. Speaker.

And so, therefore, it is interesting that there was a Member on the other side that used a word earlier today called *propaganda*. And now we see it in action because they try to elicit an emotional response—

An Hon. Member: That's what you did.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: —when the Government is making logical decisions. The Government is making decisions that are based in data, that are based in numbers, statistics. And the Honourable Member who has never been in Government, MP King, is saying that the Government does not do stuff on statistics or data. So, he would not know because has not been on this side yet.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Because he . . . No, no. I will not go there, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am not going to make it personal.

The Speaker: Don't do that.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: And so Mr. Speaker, in closing—

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: —the Government is looking to do things different. And sometimes when you do things different it is a little scary, Mr. Speaker, because there is part of the unknown. But just understand that the Government has done its due diligence. The Government has done its research. The Government has looked at the playbook that the private sector has been using for decades now of doing business outside of Bermuda. And what we have noticed is that there sometimes has to be a little nudge, motivation, inspiration to be able to change those prices, to get the desired result, which is a better quality of life for all persons that call this wonderful Island home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITORS

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Before I call on any other Member, I would just like to acknowledge our visitors in the Gallery. We have got some visitors from overseas here visiting. And one is a young man who has just recently qualified for the European Junior Championship in Spain in golf and is mentored by MP Swan.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: He is here visiting with his father, so we like to just acknowledge both by you. And it is . . . Derek [PHONETIC] is the father, and Therese [PHONETIC] is the son? Yes. Okay.

So welcome to Bermuda. And we trust you will enjoy yourself here, and you [will] get a lot of new tips from your mentor while you are in his presence. Thank you.

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

MP Cannonier?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have guests. And I have already had my recess, so I will be on my good behaviour.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: You know, I appreciate the last speaker bringing up the fact that we do need to start looking at other opportunities and avenues of bringing in goods into Bermuda. I have been on that bandwagon for quite some time now, mentioned that in the House here [on] several occasions. Even through COVID-19 we realised that there were opportunities abroad when we had to, by force, purchase goods from other jurisdictions.

And I have had a challenge with the established businesses for many years, in my own business and the likes, in finding out the same product that I am buying locally, which is produced actually in Bermuda . . . to go to another country and find out that the same product that I am paying \$19 for a case is being sold down in the islands for \$9 a case. And they are making money.

So [it is] rather interesting, this whole journey that I have had in the wholesale and retail business. But it is not as easy as it appears, that you just open up a store and you sell something. One of the intricacies now of doing business is that we can tell you exactly on the shelf what it costs for any item to be on that shelf. And so, the calculation goes in, which includes electricity, commissions, all kinds of things when you are buying from a wholesaler under different circumstances, on how we actually price out that product.

And one of the first things that I found out many moons ago was that I could sell . . . And I will just use this as an example. I could sell Fanta, an orange soda in Collector's Hill, just gobbles of it. But I could not sell pineapple there. But in town, just 15 minutes away, everyone wanted pineapple soda as opposed to the orange soda. The challenge I had was the city per square foot, costs me more than Collector's Hill per square foot.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And so that product, I had to figure out, *Okay, well, how do I price this now?* And so, these are some of the challenges that wholesalers, retailers have. And to be frank, I am not talking about the big boys. I am talking about someone like myself who came up grassroots and started my own business, trying to figure out, how do I get the pricing right?

So, I understand the fact that this whole idea of the survivor paradox, and the likes, that he mentioned [from the] 1940s. But what I will say is this, and I was glad that he brought up this whole thing about the survivor paradox. I had no idea he was going to say it. In the 1940s, that was one of the last times that you actually saw the United States impose pricing control.

An Hon. Member: Incorrect.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: One of the last times, I said. It is several times that it was done. One of the last times. And it came in because of war. And the actual Minister did speak about what was going on at the time, war planes and the like. But one of the reasons why it was imposed was because it was wartime. And you would understand why that would be the reason to impose a price control into the picture.

Now, if I were to say outright that this Bill is talking about price control, there might be some argument to say that, *well, not exactly, we are trying to regulate the industry*, right?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I hope . . . oh boy, do not get too excited yet.

[Desk thumping and Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Do not get too excited yet.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, they are taking my time away, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: That little time; I must add a little benefit for the both of you—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, you better give me more time; they are taking my time away now.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I understand the complexity of what we are dealing with. But I also understand the complexity of trying to survive in a Bermuda market, being an entrepreneur in the retail business, in the grocery business, and the like. It is a very, very difficult formula to balance. And most of the businesses that we are talking about that this Bill will affect are 100 per cent Bermudian-employed. And so, I have to balance out, just like everyone else, my reinvestment into the property when I start looking at the complexities on how I price goods.

So, for the most part, myself having actually worked in a place like, well, back then it was called . . . I am trying to remember the name of it . . . but anyhow it owned The MarketPlace—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, they had an umbrella company that owned The MarketPlace cycle shops, and all of them. I am trying to remember the name of it. It escapes me right now.

But I had the opportunity to understand the intricacies of how The MarketPlace was doing its pricing. And at the time that I came in, they were in huge debt. So they were trying to work themselves out of debt. And so, they were looking for, *how do we do a good thing?*

And one of the things that came out of it was this whole idea of price-right goods. Right? We are going to bring them in less, at better pricing. But where is it now? And the challenge was, we had difficulty in getting people to recognise that this is the same peas and carrots that you are getting from Dole. But people were not buying it, which is a challenge, because it is a mindset. Right? It is a mindset that we are trying to work with here.

And so, I get the idea that we need to broaden our purchasing of goods. But opportunity . . . you create change, quite frankly, through opportunity. You do not create change by closing up businesses.

Now, why am I saying that? I will say it this way. If we start looking at price control of a certain sector of goods, the mindset of any wholesaler or retailer is, *Okay, all right, I am restricted here with this certain number of goods. But how does that affect the rest of what I am actually selling and doing?* And what I am fearful of in this particular case (it has not happened, but what I am fearful of) is in the idea of controlling a certain sector of goods and creating administration around how we do that. What is going to happen is, what grocery stores and other retailers do is, they have sales all the time. And the idea of the sale is to bring more customers in for a particular product.

But if I am restricted on a certain number of goods, I am tempted now to say, *Well, I am not going to do those sales, because everything else is going to sit at a stagnant structure of price, because I am already controlled by this other sector.* That is the logical decision-making that these retailers and these wholesalers are going to start looking at.

So, I get the need . . . what do we do? But this Bill, quite frankly, it is not really going to change in any significant form the cost of living.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: It is not. It is just simply does . . . this Bill is not providing the solutions to that. It may be a step, but in the grand scheme of things, the challenge is with the step. What else are we creating as an unintended consequence?

So, we are already reducing, and the Honourable Member [who] spoke just before me mentioned about incentives and trickledown economics. Well, listen, in all sectors of Bermuda's economy we have been doing that. The Government provides discounts . . . sorry, not discounts, but rebates and the likes to business, in hopes that it creates more opportunity for Bermudians. That is why we have things for the hotels and all of these things going on. That's why we do it, because we are trying to create business. It is kind of like saying, I am going to give you this thing at a sale price.

And so, when I sell something in Hamilton, because it is a different price point, as I have mentioned before, because of the cost of commission that I have to pay in Hamilton, because it is a premium spot, I can sell broccoli there for a certain price. But down in Collector's Hill, I have got to sell another product because of the price difference between these two areas.

And what I am concerned about is, when we start looking at this, the new businesses, and as I said before, you create change through opportunity. The new small and up-and-coming entrepreneur who should be getting into the grocery market should be looking at the opportunity of buying down in the islands.

The challenge with buying down in the islands, of course, is the shipping cost. Right? Because we do not already have a natural route for shipping goods back and forth down in the islands. And one of the challenges Bermuda has at the end of the day is that we are importers. We are not exporters. And that is also . . . and I know the team knows that that creates a massive change in cost for Bermudians.

So, part of the solution is, okay, well, what are the grocers saying on how they can help in this area? And I have not heard that. I have not heard what some of these other wholesalers and retailers are saying as to what it is that they can do to help. We just have not heard what they are saying that they are going to do.

What we are hearing is that the Government says. Well, you know what, we are going to . . . these certain goods, we are going to stipulate a certain

amount of growth on that, or pricing on that, or whatever the case may be. But what are they saying? Because I know that for our family business, the whole idea is to maintain the fact that we hire 100 per cent Bermudian. And we pay good wages, just like many of these others.

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. W. Lawrence Scott: I think the Member is unintentionally misleading the House.

During the . . . he said he does not know what the grocers are saying and what the grocers are doing. At the Cost of Living Summit, the grocers sat on the stage and said that they have done all that they can and these are the best prices that they can do it for.

The Speaker: They may have said. But he said he was not there, so he did not know what they said. He just said he did not know what they did.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Exactly.

The Speaker: That is all. He was not misleading the House. He just was not there.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: They are taking up my time, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, so it would be nice to hear some of the feedback—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, so it would be nice to hear some of the feedback on what . . . with this consultation, some of the things that they believe that they can do.

I recognise that back in 2012, when we spoke to especially the sector of the grocers, they were willing to work with the Government on how they could affect change within the industry. And I agree with the Honourable Member; we should be looking at where we source other things. And so, if they are not willing to source from other areas, what I am saying is that we need to create the opportunity for new grocers to come along that can do that. But it is not going to be easy. I can assure you of that.

So, with the market that we have now, what I am afraid of is, once we start putting in these controls over a certain number of products, everything else becomes static. During Cup Match you are no longer going to get that discount on soda and all of this. Those sales are gone. That is what they are going to do. And the first thing that any retailer, wholesaler looks at when

it has to be concerned about cost, unfortunately, what is the first thing they look at? Labour, right? It is people. And that is not what we want to affect.

The unintended consequence as we move forward with this here—and I am highlighting this, hopefully, because I would like for the Minister and the Government to start looking at and talking to the wholesalers and retailers about this—is, *Listen, how do we also keep jobs on the table with this kind of legislation?* Rather than using cutting costs by, first thing we are going to do is cut labour. Because most of these places pay pretty good. You know, they pay fairly decent to have people working in their operations. The unintended consequence from that is less investment back into the product.

But what will happen is the small guy on the corner, which is what we are seeing, the small guy who gets a startup, he has to also comply with this. He does not get a heads-up. He also has to comply with this here. And so, usually, the young entrepreneur who probably is more of a persuasion of mine in some of these areas, he is already on the back foot because he has got to do all kinds of administration to satisfy what we have in front of us. He is on the back foot.

Who can afford to do this? The big boys. And the large chain that is out there . . . I can assure you that when the other small guys are saying this is not worth it. They have the capacity to gobble up everyone else, and they will become a monopoly. And so, I am flagging this because these are some of the things that we need to look at.

I have heard some good things when I heard the different speakers talking about the challenges that are out there. But I can assure you of this one thing, being in the industry myself. I have to make sure that I protect my employees and that they can have a place to come to work. But if, as a consequence of this, [that becomes] a challenge, what happens is I have got to let them go. And we do not want to be in that position.

I have already been complaining about the fact that we are moving back to monopolies. I have warned this Honourable House that we are on this chain of going back to monopolies. And we do not want to be in that position. I am still in the House of Assembly waiting for legislation that will bring about the changes that we want to avoid these monopolies coming in.

But I can assure you the industry and the business will work faster than the Government every single day, because they see what is coming. They understand what is coming. And they will make the move, just like I have talked about these other companies, to ensure that they get in before you do anything. So let us get some of these other pieces of legislation in place.

And then this is another thing that people are not aware of, and I want the public to be aware of this here; it is not a big secret. But when it comes to grocery stores, especially in dealing with Financial Assistance and being able to purchase goods from these places, the government will give a stipend of . . . let us just use

a broad number. Okay, I am going to give . . . we are going to give Piggly Wiggly a million dollars, right? Because people are going to come in and use their financial card to get groceries, right?

So, it is sitting in a kitty, and the grocery store pulls from that kitty as Financial Assistance people come in and get it. What I want us to work on is getting people to understand that there should not be a stigma around being able to go in and get the allotment for these monies. Because I can tell you for a fact that at the end of the year, with that million dollars I am using this as a general figure (right?), a million dollars that is allotted to the grocery stores, they wound up having to give money back to the government because it was not used up.

Now that is something that I believe that we should be working on. So, if they are giving back a quarter of a million dollars, think of how many grocery bags that fills up. And so, we could be feeding a lot more people with that, but guess what? We are not. It is not being used.

And so, there are other avenues and opportunities that we need to take a hold of. If we continue down this road, I am very fearful that we are going to wind up back with monopolies. And I do not want to be in the House saying, like I did with other industries, *Well, I said it was coming*. It is coming. Because I hate to use the name, but Piggly Wiggly is going to gobble up everybody else. They are going to. Right? They have already purchased buildings all around here. They are going to gobble it up. So, we have got to figure out where that balance is.

But I want everyone to walk away with this. The opportunity lies . . . the change lies in opportunity. Why are you wasting your time (to me) with these guys when you can be putting money behind new entrepreneurs, figuring out a new way to get products from other places that can bring about real change. And I can continue to buy my Waitrose chocolate that tastes just as good as the Cadbury. I stopped buying it (Cadbury) because I now know that Waitrose tastes better and it is cheaper.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Now, there are other places that we can get them at. Down at—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Supermart on Front Street.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Supermart on Front Street. I love that Waitrose stuff, mate.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, Waitrose stuff is great. Right? But guess what? Who bought them up?

An Hon. Member: Piggly Wiggly.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Piggly Wiggly gobbled them up.

I am telling you, it is coming. I am letting you know that with this,—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —with this particular Bill, if you do not think that they are looking at it. They might be saying to you guys in your face, *Well, yes, you know, yes, you should not do this, and you should not do that.* And listen, I believe that they want competition, right? I will put it to you this way. The question was asked to me in a forum of all these wholesalers and retailers, I think it was about 700 of us, *Mr. Cannonier* (and it was a trick question), *if you were to open up a new business, would you open it up where it is new territory and you have a fresh start, and you can build something that you want? Or would you prefer to be where some of the other cats are? They are already established.* There are no ducks to shoot in the desert. There is nobody there. I am going to shoot . . . I want to go after the ducks that are already going to all these other places.

Now, I am going to tell you this. Tessera [PHONETIC] will tell you. I used that on him. When I opened up Collector's Hill, they had all the business because Collector's Hill was closed for renovations a long time. Tessera, he knows, he's my buddy. He had all the business. I was like, *Oh, okay, I am going to go on the south side of him and I am going to take that business.* Yes, and I aggressively went in it through sales to create opportunity. If we take away the opportunity for these retailers and wholesalers to have sales, then it is a wrap. It is a wrap. And we will have monopolies. And I do not want that.

So, I flag that up because it is a major, major concern that this is coming, and the fastest way to it is price control.

But I do understand what the Government is attempting to do here. Right? Because the cost of living is through the roof. But guess what? This Bill is not addressing, really at the end of the day. It says cost of living. Guess what? This is not going to address cost of living in any significant way. Because when the US and other markets, the cost of goods goes up by 30 per cent, 30 per cent and some things more, you cannot control it.

But what you can do is create new opportunities for entrepreneurs, and sit down with the market and say, *How do we fix this?* Because I believe that with the pressure that you are applying, they will listen. No problem if you are applying pressure; you should, you are Government. Apply the pressure.

But at the same time, do not kill off the business because they got people working. Then you are going to have more people on Financial Assistance, and probably more people because of our issues with, you know, I do not want nobody to know I am on it, where The Marketplace . . . sorry, Piggly Wiggly—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: —where Piggly Wiggly is still giving back \$300,000 annually because people did not go get the groceries. That is crazy. I am telling you, these are real figures, round about, rounded off. Right?

So maybe what we should be looking at as a solution is, maybe we should be, as a Government, especially since the CIT has come into place and we are letting other people get \$20 million credits and stuff. Maybe what we should do is double the Financial Assistance for groceries because it is going to affect the people that we really need it to affect. Put the money there and encourage people. *Listen, hey, MarketPlace, you have got to clean up some of these areas.*

An Hon. Member: Piggly Wiggly.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Piggly Wiggly! *Piggly Wiggly, you have got to clean up . . .* I am going to get calls.

An Hon. Member: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I am going to get phone calls.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Piggly Wiggly wants to invest, and Piggly Wiggly will invest in new products and the like. Make it feel like it is real, make it feel like it is good, that when they come in with their card they are getting good product, and they are getting something worthwhile to pay for. Right? Change the whole process. Do not make it like, *I am going to sneak in with my little card, I do not want nobody to see* or something. No, man, when they come in with the card, man, have some balloons blowing all over the place. Or whatever, *Hey, we got somebody coming in and getting our groceries.*

I will tell you a funny story, Mr. Speaker: The first job I had when I came home from school, I actually did work at—

The Speaker: Piggly Wiggly?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, it was called Clermont Investments. Right? And it was called Clermont Investments, who owned Piggly Wiggly. And I was told that I had to go out on one of these . . . I cannot remember . . . it was Christmas or whatever the case may be. Everybody had to have a Piggly Wiggly balloon. That was

my job. Propaganda. Ooh, heard that word today, propaganda, good propaganda. Everybody had a balloon; I made sure everybody had a balloon.

So, with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I think that I have created some opportunity here. I have talked about the challenges and some of the good. But what I will say is this: This, in my opinion, is a step down the wrong road. Because I know how we think. I know how we think. And we will protect that business at all costs, because it costs me a hell of a lot of money to be in business. And if I am going to allow Government to come in and take that away, it is not going to happen. Otherwise, I can just go to another country. Right? And it is cheaper.

An Hon. Member: CARICOM.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Right? The solution is, I gave the solutions. And the other side of that coin to solutions is this: We got limited numbers here. The cost is going to go up. Less people paying electricity means higher cost. More solar means those who are on the grid will have to pay more. We have got to start looking at how we get more people back into Bermuda. And guess how we do that? It is through investment. And guess what we do with investment? Piggly Wiggly puts more money back into the stores.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to have a comment at this time? MP, you exhausted everyone, that is very good. Now, Minister?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Wait, wait.

The Speaker: Oh, MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I know you are getting very excited, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I thought your Whip had covered all the bases for you that time.

Mr. Scott Pearman: You know, he has. And actually, so many people have already spoken, and I have spoken more today than I care to do.

So, I will just give a couple of very brief points in perhaps two minutes or less, I hope.

The Speaker: Two minutes or less.

Mr. Scott Pearman: So, you can time me.

To my Honourable colleagues across the aisle, we agree the cost of living is too high in Bermuda. And no one doubts that groceries are too expensive. And I really would prefer if, on this topic, we could steer clear of the *you-do-not-care-about x or y*; or, *that-is-your-base*; or, *this-is-your-base*; or whatever.

What we are saying, in a nutshell, is the solution that is being proposed by this legislation is defective and will not solve the problem you are trying to solve.

Price controls do not work. Price controls lead to goods being short. Look to Venezuela, my colleagues earlier who mentioned it. So—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: But I would like to pick up on what Minister Adams said earlier, which is, *Well, what do you suggest?* And so, in my two minutes, here are a few:

Repeal the sugar tax.

Reduce the foreign currency purchase tax.

Grow the economy.

Increase the population. Why? So, we have more and younger people paying into our health care system, which is what we desperately need to get health care prices down.

Reduce overutilisation of medical treatments. Again, health care costs are the new mortgage of today. It is one of the cost drivers for this cost-of-living crisis that we have.

I have said this one only last week to the Honourable Minister who presented the Bill today. Amend the Regulatory Authority's powers so the Regulatory Authority can regulate BELCO and bring those prices down and take into account public need.

Duty delay. I cannot remember one of the Members on this side, I think, said, *Well, why don't we not collect duty up front? Why don't we allow businesses to delay it back?*

And finally, and I completely agree, we now have the benefit of the CIT. I do not think anyone on this side would complain if this Government gripped it and increased Financial Assistance for food for those who need it most.

And before I sit down, let me just direct one comment to the Honourable Member for CARICOM in the back. Two comments, rather.

Firstly, your Government currently has regulations through DENR that prevent the import of food from the Caribbean. So, if you would like food to come in from the Caribbean, and I am not sure that is the smartest thing with an eight-day ship, when actually the 1,500-mile example you gave to the East Coast ports, most of those are around 800 or 900 miles away, all of the East Coast seaboard, and they grow lettuce in the East Coast as well. But if you really want to try to stimulate the private sector to encourage them to bring more goods up from the Caribbean or CARICOM, or the Caribbean generally, not just CARICOM, then maybe look at the DENR rules. But I think you'll find the DENR rules are there for a reason.

So hopefully that was only two minutes, but I will just finish with: Price controls do not work.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Opposition Leader

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I will also be brief on this.

I do have a question on this, because if you have a bag of goods and you make all of the duty on those items zero, is it possible for the cost of those items to go up? The cost of the item? So, when the place purchases that item from somewhere else, that duty has nothing to do with that price, because today that price could be \$10, and tomorrow that price could be \$15, and next week that price could be \$20, and the following week it could be \$30. Because we import almost everything that comes here, we have that factor to deal with. And the reason that that is important is because when you take in all of the factors that a business has to go through, you have to understand how certain decisions get made and how technology potentially will impact decisions going forward.

For any of you that have done travel and been to grocery stores in other jurisdictions, you will notice that in many places there are not a lot of people working in those stores. You check yourself out. You do your price check by yourself. Almost all of that is the customer is now working for the business. The reason I point that out is because we have started to see some self-checkout creep into Bermuda.

So, as we increase regulation and increase the red tape of the industry, do not think that it might not have a consequence that was not part of the original plan. We want to decrease the cost of groceries in the country. Across the board, everybody sees the expenses when you go to the grocery store.

But, Mr. Speaker, there are some specific things that we have to understand. During COVID-19 was one of the issues. When the products started to come in and the products were not what people in Bermuda normally were used to purchasing, they did not want to purchase them. That is one of the things that as a culture, as a country, we are going to have to change. Because the prices that go up and up and up are on some brand name items.

But there are other items that have the same quality with a name that we are not used to. And sometimes we have to decide that that is the item that we need to purchase. Because if we can have items that are at a significantly lower cost that people can afford, but they might not have the brands that we are used to having, that also has to be an option.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Ben Smith: We cannot immediately turn our nose up because it is not the brand that we are used to. Because the issue that we have now, it is all segments of the population that are having to look twice at certain prices for certain items.

But the flip side of that is this cost-of-living issue. Anybody that looks at international news will know that it is the same subject in other jurisdictions.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: And because we import, we are importing that problem with us. Those prices that went up in another jurisdiction end up on our shelves.

So, this is not a simple thing that we can fix by reaching in and telling a business that you cannot raise that particular price. Because Mr. Speaker, what happens is, when the person walks in to get that bag of items, and let's just call them 10 items, they might purchase five others. And if what happens is, to restrict the 10 items, the prices of the other five have gone up, then nobody won.

Because you have heard several of our Members mention the sugar tax. The reason we keep bringing it up is the unintended consequence is that the cost of bottled water went up.

I know that was not the intention. Because the truth is, for healthy living, we wanted people to drink more water and less sugary drinks. So, the last thing we would have wanted was to increase the cost of water. Because those stores—that we all agree, when we go to those stores we want those lower prices—also have to bring in those items and potentially lose lots of them through spoilage. They have to pay the cost of that. They have to take on the risk of the shipping, and maybe the loss that happens during that process.

They also have to pay the bills in this country where the prices are high. They pay for the salaries of the people that work there, which means that they also have to pay the taxes that go along with having staff.

So, what we do not want to do is say we are going to reach in and restrict here and then find out that what it has done is cause prices to actually go up in other areas, and now see that we have less people having the ability to work a second job as a cashier (because that is what people have to do to survive in this country) because that is a now a self-checkout aisle. Because if you have a self-checkout aisle, you do not have to pay for health insurance.

These are the realities of where, not just Bermuda, but the world is going.

So, when we do this, let's make sure that we are understanding every step that happens after we make a decision like the one that we are making today. We have to look at all of it. Because as our population shrinks and gets older and more people are having to use Financial Assistance to get by, it also means that there are less customers in the store. So, to pay for the overhead, they increase the prices. This is the cycle that we are in. And this restriction in this area is not going to fix those issues. Those prices will continue to climb until we actually address all of those other major issues.

So, on this side, we agree 100 per cent that the prices are too high. There has to be some kind of intervention. But what we cannot do is make an intervention that has the potential to cause these other consequences. And if we have not looked at the details, that that ripple might have caused that . . . the same way that it was not looked at when the sugar tax was implemented and it caused the price of water to go up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I heard someone mention trickle-down. But I am pretty sure I heard this Government talk about *ripple economy*. That was their word that they used during the Budget Debate, I do believe. So, the question that I have is, when they implement this, do the ripples that people are going to feel mean that the price of groceries, instead of being reduced, ended up going up? And does it mean less cashiers and more self-checkout?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

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

I don't believe so.

Minister, it looks like it is your show now. Get back on your feet and take us to Committee.

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

And I do wish to acknowledge not only the robust conversation that we have had this evening, but the contributions from honourable colleagues in the House and also across the floor.

What is important to note, Mr. Speaker, is that this Government has set out a commitment. It also is clear-eyed about its intentions. And it must also be true that multiple things can happen at the same time.

The idea that I feel invited to consider is that one legislation will consider and address everything relating to cost at one time. This is the same piece of legislation that actually was advanced in 1974. I do not know who . . . as the newest member of Parliament, I do not know who was in Government at that time. But perhaps that piece—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —or a cousin, maybe not this Administration, but a distant cousin of the Opposition, would have advanced a piece of legislation that went unchanged until 2017.

And so, what we also know is true is that without vision the people perish. And so yes, successive Governments have failed to address it. And the changing of the title did not reflect what it is . . . the work of the statute and also the Commission was asked to do.

And so, in 2017, this Administration sought to begin that process. And now we are seeking to do even more.

What is also true is that we all accept, actually across the aisle, that there must be better regulation of

anti-competition and anti-trust provisions in our context. We know that we are a small Island, but that does not preclude us from making a step while likewise charting a road towards establishing that more robust framework.

And so, I have heard Members across the aisle, and also mentioned even at the top of this evening's parliamentary session, around the advocacy for regulatory clarity. How clarity, collaboration and success, one of the Honourable Members said, is what will actually be the approach that this Government ought to take. But when change is offered, immediately regulatory clarity, collaboration and success is no longer a formula that the Opposition is willing to consider. And so, I have questions around their true intent. What I know is that Bermudians every single day have, . . . oh, I am sorry.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: No, no, no, no. Do you have a point of information, Opposition Leader? Okay.

So, the regulatory clarity that I heard advocated for earlier this evening in this parliamentary session is the same level of regulatory clarity that this Bill is seeking to advance. And it is the clarity to be sure that a Government investment is actually being stewarded. How do we know? How do we know? And the Commission has also asked: *How do we know that a Government sacrifice* (to the tune of \$40 million over successive years, might I note) *has actually been appropriately passed on to the consumers?*

We also accept and began this journey a year ago, actually, with the Cost of Living Summit, which talked about and created a framework for both listening and collaboration. We said that we are not business owners. We are not the experts in the field. You are the experts. And so, therefore, help us understand your operations.

And so, we were taught and given insight around operations and supply chains and, oh, the cost of digital currency—financial transaction and credit card fees. And so, we went on a journey to also, on behalf of the operational costs that make up that cost on the shelf, we sought to explore things on behalf of the business owners.

Likewise, this morning, you would have heard we introduced never-been-contemplated relationships with US providers. This is the current status quo, current states, current supply chains. So there has not really been an effort to look beyond the current state. But again, the Government has sought to use the existing structures, use a legislation that was advanced in a previous time and space. And it has not boded well for us to be comfortable and be able to say that we are sure.

This Honourable House demands standards, reports and the like. But when it comes to this particular sector, there is a resistance to advance that same level of transparency. And I do not understand why. And I

think the public should also ask the question why that level of transparency is not being demanded.

If we know and they are doing the right thing, then you know they are doing the right thing. If we know and learn otherwise about their operational expenses, about the different things that I know for a fact, I did not appreciate that when they drive into the city they have to send two drivers. Because of the parking, one person has to get out and do the delivery, the other person has to stay in the truck. We are learning along this journey and are better informed about the different provisions.

When we understand the cost of an employee. And we understand the cost of what would be reasonably added to a good that is on the shelf along its supply chain, is that a reasonable cost? And that is what this legislation is seeking to consider and better understand through the Commission's work. It is not seeking to price control. It is the original former administration under the UBP in 1974, price control regulation.

But what you will find is a Schedule that does not list a business, unlike the electricity industry that was included in previous tablings. There is not a business in Schedule 2.

What also should be known is that this Government . . . my honourable colleague spoke to the fact that there have been multiple tests and a naïve Minister, I would argue (speaking to myself) would say, *Well, I want to also know what others may suggest to be the case.* I know there were certain things said publicly, but there has been an intentional and deliberate journey to bring both the private sector and also the public more aligned to understanding what makes up a cost.

An Honourable Member this evening talked about white labelled goods, you know, having goods that may not be brands, but they may do and taste the exact same. That is absolutely correct. And so, there is an education component that must also enter this space. And I think that, you know, the cost of living and its solution is not a one-piece of legislation, one methodology, one-step journey. It must be a collection of decisive and informed decisions. And we are seeking to be better informed. And so really that is what this legislation is seeking to advance. And to ensure that we might be deemed worthy of being prudent of the money that we are giving to, by way of duty relief, and confirm to the public and feel confident that the relief that we have given is actually reaching them.

There is an acceptance that we are . . . so I heard that there were suggestions that in other jurisdictions there is no price control as part of the remarks today, Mr. Speaker. There were clear and visible examples of other jurisdictions that have advanced this on behalf of the people of Bermuda *[sic]*. That is what they—do on behalf of their countries. And so, a country that has an advanced regulatory environment, has an advanced BMA and the like, as sectors that we would lean to as prudent and international-grade regulation

must be the same across multiple sectors. It should not just be some; it should be all. It should be all.

Just like I cannot get a parking ticket and not pay my parking ticket, there has to be an oversight. There has to be an extent to which transparency can be advanced through prudent . . . both communication and engagement for cost on behalf of those whom we have said that we are willing to serve, and we are willing to be transparent in our approach.

My honourable colleague also spoke to the fact that there was a . . . previous efforts, and previous efforts that have been done to confirm. I know the Cost of Living Commission, and the expectation that the public has of the Commission is that they will address costs. And I mentioned in the Statement, Mr. Speaker, that there will be a lack of alignment. And the Cost of Living Commission has likewise acknowledged that. But for them having oversight over the true supply chain, true cost of the goods, the very cost that would inform a decision around any sort of increases and the like, then they cannot make a decision. Having 33 essential goods is what they were invited in 2025 to steward, all while called the Cost of Living Commission. And I acknowledge that. And they acknowledge that.

And so, what this legislation is seeking to do is to say, well, what . . . it cannot just be at the retail level because what we have also tested is to understand, *Okay, do the retail and the wholesaler work together in alignment with what is on behalf of the customer?* What we also learned is that when invited to provide information without the requirement through law, there are some provisions, but in a form that says, *Share with us what can best inform the prices. Help us to understand exactly how this makes up . . .* there is resistance. And so, as recently as this week, there are letters being sent to those who just choose not to comply. And so, the question then becomes, *Is that what the Honourable Opposition wants to continue to facilitate?* Where there would not . . . there would be requests for information and just no response.

I think it would be prudent on behalf of those who we are elected to represent that we can say and be confident knowing that the cost and the transparency already in law . . . these are not, this does not even touch what we are seeking to expand today. The existing provisions in law go ignored. Members of the public will say, *Well, what is the Cost of Living Commission doing?* And the reality is they do not have the framework and mechanism in order for them to truly make decisions and weigh in relating to cost and affordability based on the stakeholders that they themselves represent.

I was intentional about selecting those who represent diversity. They did not all think the same way around the Cost of Living Commission. There are often different types of ideas being presented.

But really, what this also represents is that there must be government oversight that advocates on behalf of the people to remove abuse and/or the

tendency to abuse what should be basic human rights access, basic access to staple items, and the ability for a profit margin to increase about what we would determine our basic requirements for everyday living. It is about giving dignity to people who are finding it difficult to get chicken and bread and staple goods.

And so, but for us knowing if our efforts are truly being beneficial, then what are we even here for? It is about dignity for people so that you can know and be rest assured that those items that we have determined to be essential and those businesses that we have equally determined to be essential for living in Bermuda do not continue to erode but rather chips away at what we have defined as the Two Bermudas.

Those who cannot have access to these things, those who find it prohibitive all while the current state continues, we have failed. Anything that continues what people are complaining is not working is a failure.

And so, the resistance to change invites the question, *Well, who are we protecting?* We are not seeking to change it absolutely. We are seeking to evolve it from its current state. And that is what Honourable Members are actually invited to consider this evening. Again, it is not a schedule that includes a business or commodity at present. What it does include is a framework for better and informed decision making.

I hear Honourable Members talking about avoiding monopolies, and I think it really goes into the . . . having vision and having an understanding of true intricate dynamics of the market to be able to best make informed decisions. Also, the extent to which a hotelier and a retailer can also be a shipper, and also suggest . . . because what happens, though, having had several meetings, is that the wholesaler will blame the retailer. The retailer will blame the next person. We know that to be true. We know that to be true.

And so, the reality is we all must come together on behalf of Bermuda to ensure that the basic items are given to our public. I am not talking about alcohol and all these other things that are not determined to be essential. I am talking about the extent to which a margin and greed can be added or even suggested to be added to what we are determining to be basic and essential commodities for everyday living. Dignity and baseline goods that persons should have access to.

It becomes no longer acceptable if the Government just does one thing and cannot confirm it to be the case. We know, and we are familiar with doing so because we go to the store and we ask for a receipt. So, we are accustomed to checking what we spent, what was done. We are accustomed to that process. We are accustomed to regulation, seeing Bills. But again, in the context of anything new, there is a consistent and perpetual resistance. And the question then becomes, *Who are they actually elected to serve?*

Mr. Speaker, I think we have discussed this ad nauseum and also—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —in depth. And we can definitely go to Committee for sure, which is what I am asking to do now.

And I will look for my—

An Hon. Member: Recital.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —recital to . . . I move . . .

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move, Mr. Speaker, that the Bill be committed, with that said.

Thank you.

The Speaker: No problem. Any objections?

None.

Deputy Speaker, will you take the Chair?

Thank you.

House in Committee at 8:48 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

The Chairman: Okay. Good evening, Members.

We are now in Committee of the whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Cost of Living Commission Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

[Pause]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move that clauses 1 . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Minister, if you want to move all the clauses at once, you can.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Yes.

The Chairman: Okay, so just go ahead.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I move that clauses 1 through—

The Chairman: 20.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —20 be now—

The Chairman: Considered.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —considered.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 20 be considered.

Are there any objections?

There are none. Continue.

[Pause]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Chairman, I—

[Pause]

The Deputy Speaker: No, no, no, no, no, you need to read the clauses.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Sorry, Madam [Chairman]. Thank you for your indulgence, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1 provides that this Bill shall be cited as the Cost of Living Commission [Amendment] (No. 2) Act 2026.

Clause 2 amends section 1 of the Act, to revise existing defined terms and introduce new ones. The term “essential commodity” has been revised to include essential commodity goods and critical services. Essential commodity goods and critical services are, respectively, prescribed in regulations and designated by order made by the Minister. The terms “business undertaking” and “price” are revised to account for business undertakings, providing a critical service, for pricing information relevant to a critical service and tiered pricing. New term “other regulatory body” means any public authority having regulatory or consumer protection oversight and responsibility for a business undertaking or commodity. Finally, the term “related,” in relation to business undertaking, means sharing common ownership, control, directors or having an otherwise significant commercial relationship with another business undertaking. The clause also defines a prescribed category as a category of essential commodity or of business undertaking prescribed by regulations under section 10E(2).

Clause 3 amends section 2(3) of the Act to enable the Minister to appoint to the Commission an additional member with specific qualifications or [experience] for the purpose of an inquiry under section 9 just as a member may be so appointed for the purpose of an inquiry under sections 4 or 6.

Madam Chairman, clause 4 inserts a new section 2A into the Act, to require the Commission to prepare annual reports dealing with the activities of the Commission during the preceding financial year and for the Minister to lay such report before the Legislature. This clause also requires annual reports to provide the findings, analyses, or recommendations of any studies conducted by the Commission during the period and provides for the matters that may be assessed by any

studies so conducted. Those matters include commodity affordability indicators, pricing trends and market structures, the impact of duty reductions and other relief on commodities and barriers to competition. Finally, this clause enables the Commission to prepare and submit such other reports or recommendations within its remit as and when necessary.

Madam Chairman, Clause 5 inserts a new Part 1A to the Act (inclusive of new sections 2[B] [to] 2E). These sections do the following: (i) require that the Commission, when making a report, recommendation, or inquiry under the Act, consult other such regulatory [bodies] having oversight with respect to business undertaking or commodity that is the subject of such report, recommendation, or inquiry; (ii) enable the Commission to conduct market studies or other assessments in relation to essential commodities in conjunction with the relevant other regulatory bodies; (iii) protect against the disclosure of confidential information by other regulatory bodies to the Commission when being consulted by the Commission; (iv) enable the Commission to notify other regulatory bodies in the event of a contravention; and (v) provide [that] the legislation governing any other regulatory body shall prevail in the event of any conflict in law but that a requirement to cooperate with the Commission shall supersede. The result is a framework that removes duplication and closes gaps between existing regulators.

Madam Chairman, Clauses 6 and 7 amend respectively, sections 3 and 4 of the Act [to] enable prescribed categories of business undertakings and prescribed categories of commodities specified in the Second Schedule for the purpose of price increase control. Prescribed categories are made by regulations under section 10E(2). These amendments broaden the existing provisions which narrowly provide for specific business undertaking and specific [business undertakings and specific] commodities to be included. Clause 6 also restates the core discipline of Part 2, written notice of an increase and its amount must be given to the commission before it takes effect. The substituted tax includes installation charges, labour charges for repair, charges for supply apparatus and delivery charges from what counts as an increase in the price of a commodity. So, the substituted tax excludes the installation charges, labour charges for repair, charges for supply delivery or what counts as an increase in the price of a commodity.

Madam Chairman, clause 8 amends section 5 of the Act to enable any specified business undertaking aggrieved by a decision [of the Minister,] in hearing [an] appeal against the decision of the Commission under section 4, and further appeal to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court may remit matters for further consideration by the Minister or the Commission, and the rules of the court governing appeals from any administrative tribunals apply.

Madam Chairman, clause 9 [amends] section 6 of the Act to enable the [Minister] to give notice

requiring [a] specified business undertaking or a business undertaking [falling] under a prescribed category of business [undertaking] to furnish information and keep records for the purpose of the Act.

Clause 10 amends section 7 of the Act to enable the Minister, by order subject to affirmative resolution procedure to add [to the] Second Schedule, for the purposes of price increase [control], essential commodities or prescribed categories. Such price increase control measures will apply to essential commodities or prescribed categories of essential commodities and to business undertaking or prescribed categories of business undertakings providing essential commodities where [the Minister] considers [it] necessary in the public interest. This clause also requires, when making an order under this section, that the Minister consult the Commission and stakeholders.

Madam Chairman, clause 11 inserts new section 7A into the Act to provide, with respect to the price increase control of any essential commodity or prescribed category of essential commodity in the Second Schedule, that an “increase in the price or charge” means any increase resulting in a 5 per cent or greater increase in the price or charge of the essential commodity within the same [fiscal] year. [The Minister may] by order, subject to negative resolution procedure, amend the percentage figure and in doing so must have regard to the public interest, any reports or recommendations of the Commission, [and] any joint assessments carried out by the Commission and/or its primary regulatory body.

Clause 12 amends section 8 of the Act to ensure that enforcement in relation to the price increase control measures also applies to commodities [falling] under a prescribed category in the Second Schedule and to business undertakings [falling] under a prescribed category of business.

Clause 13 amends section 9 of the Act to enable the Commission, where [so required by the Minister], to inquire into any duty reductions or any other cost reliefs given in respect of a specified commodity.

Madam Chairman, Clause 14 repeals and replaces section 10[A(1)] of the Act to enable the database . . . to also include the price of essential commodities sold at business undertakings falling under the prescribed categories . . . in the Second Schedule.

Clause 15 inserts new section 10DA into the Act to enable the Minister to designate “critical services” to certain business operations. This clause requires [the Minister,] when making such order, [to consider] the necessity of service for daily living, the availability of substitute services, and whether the cost of this service materially impacts affordability for consumers. The Minister may also have regard to instances where the same business undertaking carries out two or more of the following operations: the shipping and freight of food and other household goods to Bermuda, the wholesale importation, supply, storage, warehousing, or distribution of food and household goods to

retailers and consumers, and the retail sale of food and other household goods directly to consumers. This clause requires the Minister to consult . . . and the Commission to consult with the sector and such other regulatory bodies, if any, with respect to the service to be designated. Finally, this clause requires such designation to be made by order in the affirmative resolution for passing in this House. The order specified by the other regulatory body, if any, with whom the Commission shall consult and work for the purpose of the Act for the avoidance of doubt the new section 10DA(7) provides that nothing in the section derogates from a critical service as it relates to the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 2021.

Clause 16 amends section 10E of the Act, which is the regulation-making provision for the price information monitoring [of essential commodities]. This [clause] enables the following to be prescribed in regulations: a list of essential commodities goods [and] any categories of essential commodity goods; a list of services or categories of service which may then be designated [as critical services]; and categories of business undertaking that are to furnish [price] information to the Commission.

Clause 17 inserts, Madam Chairman, section 10F [to] 10H into the Act. The new section 10F enables the Minister in consultation with the Commission in writing to have inspectors under the Consumer Protection Act in 1999 to assist the Commission in making inquiries and monitoring compliance under the Act. New section 10G provides for providing false information under the Act to an offence carrying a fine of \$2,000 on summary conviction. New section 10H enables the Minister to make regulations subject to negative resolution procedure prescribing other regulatory bodies with whom the Commission shall consult or collaborate with enabling the making of any agreements with the Commission and any such regulatory bodies can work cooperatively.

Clause 18 repeals and replaces the Second Schedule of the Act to allow for the prescribed categories and replaces the Schedule bearing the heading “Regulation of Increase [in] Price or Charge” versus “Price Control.”

Clause 19 makes consequential amendments to the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Regulations 2022 to distinguish under those Regulations an essential commodity from the broader category of essential commodities.

Madam Chairman, clause 20 provides for the commencement of the Bill, which shall be on such day as the Minister responsible for consumer affairs may appoint by notice published in *[The Official] Gazette*.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak on clauses 1 through 20?

I recognise the Member from constituency 12.

Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Madam [Chairman].

On page 7, [clause 11] [new section] 7A(2), where it says, "For the purposes of this section (as read with section 3), an increase in the price or charge . . ." that section there. I have a question on that.

I am just curious as to exactly how this is implemented. Like, how does . . . what is the mechanism? How does this work? How does the . . . if it goes up, is it the wholesalers telling you that it is going up? Or are you questioning every month whether the pricing is going up? I am just curious as to how this actually does happen. And I will ask further questions on that after that.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Shall I finish with my questions then?

The Chairman: You can.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay, yes.

So that is the first part, trying to understand that mechanism, and the timing. It will be important to understand the timing of this because in order for it to be effective you need to know this stuff as soon as possible. Right? Otherwise, it is of no use. And then it just backs up. It is just data.

So, the second part of that question then is . . . this makes a suggestion [where] in the first part it says, *this is meaning a price increase*. Okay, well, that is fine. We are trying to understand the price increase. But just because (meaning the price) the cost of something goes up, I'm trying to understand whether or not this is in relation to *cost* or this is in relation to *retail price* when it says *meaning the price increase*. Is this in relation to cost? Or is this actually retail price? Just because a product increases in cost doesn't always mean that it will increase in retail price. Right? Because the seller has different formulas for different shelves and things. Right?

And then the next part in relation to that, trying to understand this same particular cost, if we only want to know when the price increases, whether it's cost or retail, why would we not be interested if it goes down? I mean, you know, we are talking about trying to understand the market and how it works and the complexities. Why would you not want to know whether the price goes down? Because one of the greatest opportunities . . . for instance, I will use cigarettes. One of the companies that imported cigarettes before the budget came would bring in seven containers of cigarettes knowing that within the next two weeks, guess what? The price was going to go through the roof. Right? So, they made money overnight just by bringing it in before you increased the duty on the product.

So, I'm trying to make sure that if we are going to understand the increase in price, we should also understand the decrease in the cost of an item if you are really trying to understand the market. Otherwise, you are going to miss a whole bunch that is going on and the market is moving very quickly.

And now, just as an example with product, because of the new point of sale system I'm not bringing in containers [one] at a time all the time. I can bring [one] in every week. If I typically bring in four containers at the end of the month, I can bring one container this week, a container the next week, a container the next week, because I'm keeping on top of my inventory in Bermuda's limited space.

So, I want to understand the mechanism and how that all works.

The Chairman: Okay.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30. Member, you have the floor

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Just regarding clause 11, I just wanted to ask, does this particular clause apply to specials? So, in other words, I have a special on potatoes. It drops 10 per cent. I want to now return those potatoes back to the original price which triggers a 10 per cent increase. Does this section take into account specials? And if they do get flagged . . . let us say that that triggers a 5 per cent and it comes across the Minister's desk. Does the retailer or store have to wait until . . . let's say the Minister intervenes. Or do they have to wait until they get that approval?

Are specials carved out by the Commission? Because I can see how that might be a bit finicky. It might also dissuade people from doing specials. Right? Because we all know we have, as the Minister mentioned, Wednesday and certain built-in specials that stores across the Island do. And I just want to make sure it is not a bottleneck for that.

Also, why wasn't this particular authority in clause 11 given to the Cost of Living Commission? I fear that this may cause an admin bottleneck with all retailers, or people affected by this clause, having to go through the Minister, potentially. And if there are multiple price rises which are required to be processed by the Minister and the Ministry, that could cause a huge admin bottleneck that could affect the retailer who may say, *You know what? Because I had to wait . . .* I'm not saying the Minister is slow. But if I have to wait two months, right?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: If I have to wait two months I may not want to do that special again because I had to

wait two months to get an approval for me to raise it over 5 per cent.

And just in clause 17, it mentions the inspectors under the Consumer Protection Act 1999. And I just wanted to ask if this enforcement addition is going to cause any additional cost to Government. And if so, what is that cost?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

At this time, there being none, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman

I do thank the Honourable Members for their questions. If I might begin with the Honourable Member from constituency . . .

The Chairman: Twelve.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Twelve. Sorry, my apologies.

—who has sought to understand, like, operationally, what does this look like? Members should be aware and recall that the full Cost of Living Commission Amendment Act includes existing provisions for price oversight in that the Commission has the ability to ask for information.

We recently came to this Honourable House and tabled a price tracker to be able to enhance transparency of cost. But what the Commission appreciated is that that cannot be the final picture that is shared with the public relating to cost, and that the final cost was just the end of the conversation relating to cost. And so, it is the providing through engagement with the retailers and wholesalers, the entire cost per container of a particular item. I'm sorry, particular items that are included in the Schedule.

So, let's take the 33 essential goods that are currently in law . . . or were in law, and those items being shared and requested by the Commission monthly. So, they are sharing that information.

We actually met with them in advance of the expansion, expanded items, to say: *Is this a difficult process? We understand that you all use similar systems. How hard is it to allot and assign these items?* There is an increased number of tariff codes with the new and expanded list of essential commodities. But the response was that it was possible, and that it would not add administrative burden to them, because it is part of the software and systems that they usually use. And it is an export to the Ministry using an Excel spreadsheet that they all would use often.

So, we do appreciate that there are additional costs that they may feel now, having reflected. And the Ministry and the Commission have always kept their

doors open to further understand those challenges. But at the end of the day, they need the data to make more informed decisions.

The Honourable Member also asked about clause 17 in terms of the appointment of individuals. So, we do have Consumer Affairs under the remit of the Ministry. Members would also be aware that there has been tabled in the previous Budget Debate and the most recent Budget Debate a pilot to the Regulatory Authority. Well, this actually is the infrastructure that we have already signalled is . . . we are seeking support. And the Regulatory Authority has supported the co-authoring of expanded legislation for future greater oversight over markets in this way, because we already knew that they do that well. And so existing remit is under the Consumer Protection Act. But we do see a more permanent place, perhaps somewhere else and in support by existing regulatory frameworks.

About specials, the Commission did deliberate and the Minutes also reflected the fact that this does not include specials. Even when we are talking about how we want to transparently have prices listed for these essential goods, that question was raised and reflected in the Minutes. And they decided that, no, not specials, because specials are quite frequent. And that will create, you know, added burden. And we are trying to advance transparency and also, as a Commission, have a better understanding of all costs and what makes up these costs to be able to make informed decisions about oversight.

I believe I've answered the three questions shared.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 12. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

I wasn't sure if I missed the answer, but part of the question that I asked before was, this particular Bill, on page 7 at the top, this 5 per cent that we are talking about in [new section] 7A(2), talks about a price increase. And what I was trying to find out is, are we also looking at price decrease? And I did not get the answer to whether or not this price that we're talking about was retail price or cost.

The Chairman: Okay.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Just trying to understand better.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Honourable Member for the clarification.

The answer is both. So, it is around retail price, the cost at the shelf. But also, the retail price and the cost also that has made up that price. So, the supply chain costs, that have been reflected or received by the frontline with the cost, essentially.

And the question that you have asked in terms of how does the 5 per cent . . . I don't know that I'm clear on . . . I mean, what we have invited is clarity around what makes up that price. The Commission has asked, at present, and the Minutes will reflect that they ask for it in monthly increments of time. And so, when you have it monthly you are going to naturally also see trends if it goes down or up, per the listed commodities included in the Act and the duty free item. That is the basis for further oversight and questioning as required. But it would present and provide trends, ultimately, if it is being received on a monthly basis. Those same items that receive duty relief and/or greater oversight. The Commission would be empowered through greater trend information.

The Chairman: Are there any other questions?
I recognise the Member from constituency 12.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Just one more, just so I understand more clearly.

So, at the top it talks about this reporting being based on price increase. So, this Act does not require if the price goes down for them to report it, because it says *meaning price increase* when we apply [new] section 7A.

So, by rights, you know, if you are only looking for the increase as we go forward, if it goes down I do not have to tell you. Right? So, I'm just trying to understand why we wouldn't make sure that it is enshrined in an article here even meaning price increase and decrease.

The Chairman: Okay.
Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?
There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I do take the Honourable Member's suggestion. But I just want to also refer to the fact that they are not part of what is being presented at present and . . . amended, sorry, at present. The Act speaks to the increments of time that the Commission may be empowered to request information relating to price. That is a provision that is untouched by the amendments that we are speaking of this evening.

And so, any trends that would talk about price going up or down for whatever is listed as essential and critical would be reflected and reported on monthly. So,

the trend and the requirement for added signalling is almost I guess a little . . . I am still unclear about that.

But the intention is to be able to have monthly data shared to be able to both understand the trends, understand what makes up those costs. And should there be outliers in cost, they are being signalled to the Commission for them to say: *Okay. We better understand this. This is reasonable.* There is no challenge as included in the Schedule only, though.

So, but for the Schedule being populated, it is just a transparency provision, transparency framework that is currently being advanced.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Based on that answer, yes. I just want to make sure that we don't miss out on an opportunity for the Government here.

So, based on that answer, then . . . because the Bill here basically is saying that this applies, which means a 5 per cent or greater increase in the price or charge for the essential commodity within the same fiscal year. Right? And that the Minister then can, further on, intervene and change that percentage.

However, it does not state that if the cost is less . . . and I gave an example that sometimes there are opportunities if the cost is less. I'm still going to keep it at the same retail price to make a greater margin because I'm giving a sale somewhere else.

And I don't want to miss out on the opportunity that if they do reduce the cost . . . and I'm assuming what she is saying is that they will see the fact that the cost is reduced. But maybe the Minister might want control over that as well. In this case, she does not. If it goes down, it goes down. But she does not really have much control. Here it is saying she has control if it is 5 per cent or more.

So, I think there might be an answer there, but I'm not sure. But we will see as it goes along how it works.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30.
Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you.

Not a new question. Just I'm still waiting for the outstanding one about clause 11 as to why this particular authority was not given to the Commission, the Cost of Living Commission to avoid potential administrative bottlenecks with it being placed at the Minister.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you.

Does anyone else wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

Okay. There being no one else at this time, I call on the Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Sorry, may I just seek clarification on clause 11 in terms of are you talking about 7A and the extent to which joint studies or other assessments are carried out? Is that what you're seeking to ask?

The Chairman: Member. I recognise—

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: I recognise you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Just regarding [the Explanatory Memorandum for clause 11], “The Minister may by order, subject to the negative resolution procedure, amend the percentage figure and in doing so must have regard to the public interest, any reports or recommendations of the Commission . . .”

I am just wondering, instead of “the Minister may by order,” maybe this may have been something to empower the Commission, to avoid that bottleneck. Because now the Minister must . . . if it is deemed to be an intervention there it has to come through the Minister.

So, I'm just saying it already has “carried out by the Commission and the other regulatory body.” So why not just allow the intervention to be done via the Cost of Living Commission?

The Chairman: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

There being none at this time, Minister, when you are ready to address this question . . .

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman

I think what the Honourable Member is seeking to present is actually not . . . it is representing an anomaly in the context of what is typically done by Ministers, and also as part of regulation. Just like I would table and/or lay a Regulatory Authority report in the House. The same is true based on what the Commission's findings and recommendations would be in order to advance an item that has been deemed critical and essential.

And there is a desire to have greater stewardship to support access for those in the public and remove the increases in cost. That is really what it is about. It is like allowing access to these items. If it is deemed to be critical, if you believe for dignity to live in Bermuda you need to have access to this good, this service, then that is the trigger for oversight. And the

oversight is around transparency about how we arrived at said cost.

And so, I did provide the Honourable Member with that example and/or explanation. I trust it is sufficient and happy to obviously discuss if further clarification is required.

The support of the Minister is also aided by both the Commission and the current price . . . price . . . what is it? The Consumer Protection Act. (I'm getting tired.) Consumer Protection Act, which does have investigative officers and the appropriate mechanisms to trigger investigations and support as required.

I think I have answered the questions.

I move that—

The Chairman: Just a minute.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Oh, sorry.

The Chairman: Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 through 20?

There being none . . . Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: And I move that clauses 1 through 12 [*sic*] be approved.

The Chairman: Just [clauses] 1 through 12?

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Clause 20. Sorry. Be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 20 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 20 passed.]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

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

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

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 9:22 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled, the Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, being reported to the House as printed?

There are no objections.

The Bill will be reported as printed.

That brings us to the close of that matter and moves us on to the next item, which is [Order] No. 7. The second reading of the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 in the name of the Junior Minister for Justice.

Junior Minister, would you like to present your matter at this moment?

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

It is late on a Friday night, Mr. Speaker, so we will try and do this, and hopefully there is not much objection from the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay.

BILL

SECOND READING

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present for the consideration of this Honourable House, the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026, a Bill that answers plainly and directly the call that has echoed from every parish that the violence must end and that justice must be done.

Bermuda is a community of neighbours. We are an Island where families have lived side by side for

generations, where we greet one another on our roots and where the loss of any one of us is felt by all of us. That is precisely why the escalating crisis of gang violence cuts so deeply. Behind every headline is a mother who has buried a son, or a family whose life has been divided forever into a “before” and an “after.” Over the past two decades, this Island has recorded over 30 unsolved murders, which have been the product of gangs, guns, and a corrosive culture of reprisal.

Mr. Speaker, these are not cold cases in the sense of being forgotten. The Bermuda Police Service has been clear that these cases are not closed. What stands between these families and justice is not in most cases a lack of truth. It is fear. In case after case, the police know that people in our community hold the key. People who saw something, who heard something, or who know something. However, they do not come forward because they are afraid.

Mr. Speaker, this Government refuses to accept that fear should have the final word in Bermuda. This Bill's organising purpose is convictions and securing them lawfully, fairly, and effectively. It is convictions that take shooters off our streets, convictions that break the cycle of retaliation and convictions that bring closure to grieving families who have waited far too long.

The Bill strengthens three pillars of our criminal law, namely, the Evidence Act 1905, the Criminal Code Act 1907, and the Bail Act 2005. I shall address each in turn.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends the Evidence Act 1905 to introduce two new court-controlled protections, investigations anonymity orders and witness anonymity orders.

An investigation anonymity order granted by a magistrate will prohibit the disclosure of information identifying a person as someone who is assisting a serious criminal investigation. In plain terms, it means that a person who wants to do the right thing can speak to the police without the whole Island knowing they have done so. Information can flow safely to investigators at the very stage when it matters most.

A witness anonymity order granted only by the Supreme Court will permit a witness to give evidence at trial with their identity protected through the withholding of their name, the use of a pseudonym, screening, or voice modulation where the court is satisfied that such measures are necessary, consistent with a fair trial and in the interest of justice. Witness anonymity is not a silver bullet, as no single measure will on its own solve the crisis of gang violence. But is a good tool in the toolbox, a proven tool in use in the United Kingdom, in Canada, in Australia and in neighbouring jurisdictions.

This Bill gives those who hold critical testimony a lawful, judiciously supervised path to share it. Every conviction secured is a retaliation that never happens, and every verdict delivered is a family at long last given an answer.

Mr. Speaker, these protections are tightly confined. They are available only for serious arrestable offences as defined under section 3 of the Police and Criminal [Evidence] Act 2006, a familiar tested statutory threshold that excludes minor offending. It is the Court, and never the prosecutor, that decides whether an order is granted. At trial, anonymity may be ordered only where the Supreme Court is satisfied that it is necessary, that it is consistent with the defendant receiving a fair trial and that the interest of justice requires the witness's testimony.

The Bill expressly requires the trial judge to warn the jury so that making of an order cannot prejudice the defendant. The right to silence is untouched. The common law of public interest immunity is preserved, and the Director of Public Prosecutions must review the operation of the entire regime and report to both Houses of this Legislature within three years, so this Parliament retains oversight on how these powers are used.

Mr. Speaker, some have suggested that these protections should be limited to gang-related charges. The Government has considered that suggestion carefully and, with respect, must resist it. Gang-related is not a defined term in Bermuda law and to build witness protection upon an undefined concept would invite endless litigation over whether a case qualifies, producing delay and uncertainty precisely where speed and certainty are needed.

More fundamentally, it puts the cart before the horse, as it is very often the investigation itself, assisted by protected persons, protected witnesses, that establishes gang involvement in the first place. The serious arrestable offence threshold combined with the rigorous judicial safeguards I have described does the narrowing that fairness requires.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge, too, the concern voiced by some in the profession that true anonymity is difficult in a jurisdiction as small as ours. We do not dismiss that concern. However, the difficulty of protecting witnesses can never be a reason to abandon them.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill amends the Criminal Code Act 1907 to create new offences of assaulting or intimidating a judicial officer, a prosecutor, or a Member of the Legislature whether on duty or targeted off duty in retaliation for, or because of, their office.

Honourable Members may ask whether such provisions are truly necessary in Bermuda. Regrettably, they are. A Crown Counsel has been threatened within the very precincts of our courts. A magistrate has been threatened in a separate matter. And those who serve in our justice system will tell you that such threats occur far more often than will ever be publicly known. When those who uphold the rule of law can be menaced with impunity, it is not only they who are attacked but also the administration of justice itself, and with it the safety of every citizen who depends upon it.

The penalties in this Bill reflect that gravity with up to 25 years imprisonment on indictment for assault

occasioning bodily harm to an official in the execution of duty, up to 15 years for retaliatory attacks on off-duty officials, and up to 10 years for intimidation. As a safeguard against misuse, no prosecution may be brought without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has listened to the constructive suggestion that this protection be extended to jury members. We agree. Jurors sit at the very heart of the trial process this Bill is designed to protect. So, intimidating a juror strikes at verdicts as directly as intimidating a judge. The Government will therefore support an amendment on the floor of this Honourable House to include jury members within the protected class.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends the Bail Act 2005 to confront a problem that has undermined public confidence for too long, which is, bail conditions breached with little or no consequence, leaving witnesses and communities exposed. Under this Bill, the wilful or unlawful breach of a bail condition becomes a criminal offence punishable on summary conviction by a fine of up to \$25,000, or imprisonment for up to three years in the case of court bail, with proportionate penalties for breaches of police bail. No prosecution may be brought without the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions, a safeguard that ensures the trivial or the inadvertent will not be criminalised, and that prosecutorial judgment is applied to every case. The Bill also introduces a right to refer a bail decision of the Magistrates' Court to the Supreme Court for a full re-hearing.

Mr. Speaker, I emphasise that this right is even-handed as it is available equally to the defence, where bail has been refused, and to the prosecution, where bail has been granted over its objection. Judicial discretion is not removed as a higher court simply takes a fresh look. The Commissioner of Police has confirmed that these amendments will allow the police to act quickly to stop further offending and to protect witnesses, and that assurance goes to the very heart of what this Bill is about.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has been careful in ensuring that decisive action remains fair. The Bill has been reviewed for compliance with the constitutional guarantee of a fair trial and with other human rights obligations. Every significant power it creates is placed in the hands of an independent court. The jury must be warned. The DPP's office consent gates the new offences. The legislation retains oversight through a mandatory three-year review.

I also acknowledge the Bermuda Police Service which has endorsed this Bill with the Commissioner describing it as a clear indication of a commitment to strengthening our criminal justice system and a positive and practical step forward. I thank the Commissioner and the women and men of the service who confront this violence every day on our behalf. And I acknowledge the members of the public who have

welcomed this Bill and who have called upon their Government to act.

Laws set the boundaries of what a society will tolerate, and this Bill declares in terms that no one can mistake what Bermuda will no longer tolerate. We will not tolerate witnesses silenced by fear; we will not tolerate those who serve justice being threatened for doing so; and we will not tolerate bail treated as a suggestion rather than an obligation.

Mr. Speaker, to the families who have waited years for answers, the Government has heard you. And today these lives matter, and because their memory demands, we act.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that the Bill entitled the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 be now read a second time, and I commend it to this Honourable House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Junior Minister.

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

MP Pearman.

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

I thank the Honourable Junior Minister for his presentation in relation to this Bill. I also would like to specifically thank the Honourable Attorney General, although she does not sit in this House and sits in another place, as she reached out in relation to this Bill. And we have had some discussions in relation to it, some of which have been fruitful, as the Junior Minister noted, in terms of the floor amendment that he intends to move in relation to clause 3.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill in effect does four things. Firstly, it is going to permit Bermuda's criminal justice system to have investigative anonymity orders and witness anonymity orders. What, you may ask, are the differences between those two things? Well, the investigative anonymity order applies to the investigative stage from the events through to trial, just before trial. And then the witness anonymity order allows for anonymity during the trial itself. So, there are two different types of orders envisaged, and I will come back to those.

The second of four things that this Bill does is clarify that it will be a criminal offence if you assault or intimidate those who are involved with the criminal court system, specifically a judicial officer. And I understand that that would include any other judicial officers, such as a bailiff who might be in court at the time.

It extends to assault and intimidation of the prosecutor. And as the Honourable MP made the point earlier, excuse me, Junior Minister, the Honourable Junior Minister made the point earlier, MP Lister, this is not just fantasy or what if. These things have actually occurred in our courts. And I am familiar with at least two of them.

I am very grateful to the Junior Minister and the Minister that they were prepared to adopt the Opposition's recommendation that the offences of assault and intimidation also extend to members of the jury, because we were concerned about jury intimidation and assault as well. And so, I do thank the Honourable and Learned Minister, who, as I say, sits in another place. On this very occasion this evening, she is in the Chamber as well.

The third of four things that this Bill does is create a new offence of breach of bail conditions. And that is pretty self-explanatory.

And the fourth thing it does is really just a technical provision on transitional provisions. But the important part of that fourth thing is that this will not be retrospective. So, this will be going forward in time in relation to future criminal investigations and criminal trials.

At its heart, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is trying to address, and I'll quote from the preamble, "the escalating crisis of gang violence in Bermuda." And I would like to just pause there to observe that this Government is right, in my respectful opinion, to describe it as a crisis. I believe it is a crisis.

And I also commend the Government for having the proper focus on this piece of legislation, because I know that sometimes we in the Opposition stand up and say: *Well, why are you bringing this Bill? Why are you doing that? Why aren't you focusing on real problems?* And I think on this occasion, we are agreed on both sides of the House that this is a real problem.

Now, I'm being very nice. I'm sure I will have some things to say that are less nice about solutions. But I really do appreciate the focus that is being presented. And I think the general Bermudian public appreciates it because it is a crisis and it is very real.

And now turning to the four elements of the Bill, or three, the three substantive elements, I'm not going to comment on the transitional provisions. Turning to the three elements of the Bill itself, I do not really need to comment much on the bail condition; it is the creation of a new offence. So, if you are in breach of your bail condition, well, that too is a crime, and you could be put in jail for that. Self-explanatory.

I do want to touch quickly on the assault and intimidation point. And again, I have already expressed my thanks in relation to the fact that jurors are now included. Which I think is essential because jurors in our system have to know that they too are protected by the system and that we will have no truck with assault or intimidation of them. And of course, they seem a ripe target if those who are involved with the defendant, perhaps in the same gang, figure that that is a pressure point to put pressure on. And we must ensure insofar as we are able that that pressure is not applied. And that if it is applied, that those people too receive sanction. A criminal sanction.

Turning then to the anonymity orders. And again, I made clear when I started that there are two different kinds. There is one in relation to the investigation. And then there is one in relation to the witness giving evidence at the trial. And, in my submission, that distinction is an important one. Because I can see the justification for witness anonymity during the investigative stage. I do not see why that offends against someone's conscience that people are able to liaise with investigative officers, with the prosecution, with the police on an anonymous basis, and give that evidence that helps those investigating to formulate what their case will be and to formulate the charges brought. And so, one, I think, has less of an issue during the investigative period with anonymity orders applying to witnesses in that context.

Just to be boring for a minute, how does that work? It is going to work by application to a magistrate, as the Honourable Junior Minister pointed out. There is an eyebrow-raising point there, and I will just mention it in passing. But I will pause to note that the defendant's attorney is not present at that hearing for the investigative anonymity order to be granted. I query whether that might be something that someone would complain about, perhaps. But I just mention it in passing.

What is slightly different is the witness anonymity order in the context of the trial. And this is where we do part company with the Government on the Bill as it is presented tonight.

Really, this is a Bill that, as I quoted, is to effectively address the escalating crisis of gang violence in Bermuda. And if you are going to have people be able to give their evidence anonymously in a criminal trial, you have to make sure that that is really restricted to the proper circumstance and situation.

In the UK, for example, witness anonymity for the trial relates to cases of terrorism. And one can perhaps understand why, when we are dealing with terrorism, one might have witness anonymity. Likewise, the parallel here would be cases relating to a crisis of gang violence. And whilst the Bill says that is what it is about, it is slightly concerning that at present, if the Bill is not amended, this actually will apply to all qualifying offences. And qualifying offences are defined as a serious arrestable offence.

And I'm not going to bore everyone with the law, but a serious arrestable offence is quite a broad concept. There are a number of charges that fall within serious arrestable offences that have absolutely nothing to do with gang-related activity. And so, we have invited the Government to consider further between now and when this Bill makes it to the other place whether it would be right and proper at the application for the trial to the Supreme Court judge, the investigative stage is dealt with by the magistrate. It is the Supreme Court judge who deals . . . he or she would deal with the trial anonymity. And we wonder, given that at that stage, charges will have been laid, and we will know what they are. We wonder whether it would be

more appropriate at that stage just to limit it to gang-related charges, or those charges that do or may, perhaps. Again, I leave the wording precisely to the Government to think about. But that is the point in a nutshell.

And why do we suggest that change? Well, at the moment there are already charges in the Criminal Code in relation to gang-related activity. I think that my honourable colleague, Jarion Richardson, MP, is going to speak in a moment. And he knows far more about this than I do from his previous career. But just for anyone who really is interested, there is [in the Criminal Code Act 1907] section 70JA (that is Juliet Alpha), and section 70JB (Juliet Bravo), which relate to actual charges of gang-related activity.

Unless the point is not completely understood, let me just return just briefly to this idea that serious arrestable offences are quite broad. And we would like to see witness anonymity simply narrowed to cases of gang-related activity. Why do we say that? Well, let me just give two hypothetical examples.

One hypothetical would be the charge of rape. If you were arrested and brought to court on a charge of rape, but the person who alleges that you raped her (if I use the man as a rapist and the female as the victim or alleged victim) . . . you would not actually know, if a witness anonymity order was granted, who your accuser was. And I think that does pause us for thought.

Well, hang on, you mean I could be arrested, charged with rape, go to court and actually not know who is making that accusation against me?

And the answer is, yes. Under this Bill as it stands, that could happen.

Now, maybe that is too extreme an example. Let me take a less extreme example, but still a concern. Let us say that you came into work at your bank one day, and you are brought into the office, and there the police are, and you are arrested because it is said that you took money out of the bank till. And you say: *Well, no, I didn't.*

They say: Well, I have someone who saw you take the money out of the bank till, and you are being arrested, you are being charged.

And off to trial you go. And you get to trial, but you are not told who the witness was who saw you take the money out of the bank till.

So, I hope those examples, which are not extreme examples, show us why when we are dealing with gang-related activity, or terrorism, witness anonymity protection orders are understandable and potentially defensible. But when we are dealing with all serious arrestable offences, I do suggest it is a bridge too far to not have a right to know who your accuser is. And the right to face your accuser is a right of long-standing. It goes back hundreds of years. I said jokingly to someone earlier, it was older than the Magna Carta. I'm not sure I was right about that, but there we are.

So, I have invited, we have invited the Government, who were very good at taking on our suggestion

about protecting jurors. And we thank them for that. And we have invited them to this one further change to the legislation as and when it moves to the other place in the Upper House.

And let me just conclude with these remarks. We absolutely do appreciate the severity of the gang problem. And I have said before publicly that if we are going to tackle the gang problem, it involves all of us. Every single person on this Island has to recognise that we are in it together and we have to solve the problem together. It will not be solved by isolated pockets here and there around the Island. It has to be a collective effort.

And before I take my seat, I forgot to mention earlier when I was talking about the two specific gang-related charges. If I may be so complimentary, I do not know when they came in, under what Government or how long ago. But they were actually very good ideas. Because what they did was, if you brought a . . . you had a charge of gang-related activity, you got an additional period of incarceration if that was proved at trial. And that is the kind of thing I think that we want to see happening more. Because I am told, and it is anecdotal, and I'll defer again to Mr. Richardson, MP, and his depth, great depth of knowledge in this field, but I'm told that those sections are not really being used very much in criminal cases and charges before our courts.

So again, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Honourable and Learned Attorney General, and thank you to the Junior Minister for his detailed presentation.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member . . . MP Weeks, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

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

The Speaker: Continue, Member.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you for having me.

Before I get started, I want to say I give full support to the Junior Minister on bringing this Justice and Community Safety [Reform] Act 2026, and to commend the Attorney General and her team for doing this.

I am not going to be technical and go through line by line, but I really want to speak about why these reforms are important, Mr. Speaker, why they deserve our support, and why they represent another meaningful step in this Government's ongoing commitment to building safer communities and strengthening Bermuda's justice system.

Mr. Speaker, every Member of this Honourable House shares a responsibility to ensure that our constituents go home safe, that our homes are secure, and they should be confident that the institution that has been designed to protect them is actually equipped to meet the challenges we face today, Mr. Speaker. So, I firmly feel that that responsibility requires us not only to

respond to crime, Mr. Speaker, when it occurs, but also to ensure that our laws remain effective, balanced, and capable of addressing the evolving nature of criminal activity as we see it in Bermuda today.

As we all know, Bermuda has made significant progress in confronting gang violence and organised crime over recent years. That progress has not happened by chance. It has been achieved through the dedication of our Bermuda Police Service, the hard work of our prosecutors and judiciary, the commitment of community organisations, and the resilience of countless Bermudians who have refused to allow violence, Mr. Speaker, to define our Island. Those efforts deserve recognition. But they also remind us that progress cannot lead to complacency, Mr. Speaker. Criminal activity continues to evolve. We now live in a Bermuda where violence has almost become the norm. We have a gang culture that is out there that is not willy-nilly. They are organised. They do things in an organised fashion. And I believe that our judiciary and our legislation must evolve to meet this new challenge.

I heard the [Honourable and Learned] Member who just took his seat. And I agree with what he was saying. But one thing is, it may be a stretch, but it is not for me. Terrorism takes on different ways. Terrorism sometimes forces our Government to act. And the way this new gang culture is in Bermuda, they are forcing the Government to act, to stay connected to the ever-evolving nature of the criminal activity. So, as far as that is concerned, I think that is why I welcome this Bill, because we have to look seriously about protecting our communities and our country and let those who are involved in the gang lifestyle know that this Government is watching, and looking, and we are doing what we can.

So, what I really appreciate about these reforms is that they are not simply about imposing tougher penalties or creating additional offences. They reflect a broader commitment, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our justice system remains effective, fair, and responsive to the realities faced by law enforcement prosecutors, victims, and the courts.

Importantly, these reforms also form part of the Government's wider anti-violence strategy. Over the last couple of years, the Ministry of National Security has put in place the [National] Violence Reduction Strategy, and it has been rolled out. This is inextricably bound to that Strategy, Mr. Speaker. I believe this is worth emphasising because reducing violence cannot be achieved only through enforcement. We all recognise that lasting change requires investment in prevention, education, intervention, rehabilitation, and stronger partnerships throughout our communities. Mr. Speaker, prevention, education, intervention are direct tenets of the anti-violence strategy. So, this is not just a punitive change that is being done by the Attorney General and her team.

I feel that our young people, Mr. Speaker, must continue to see opportunities that lead them away from violence. Families must receive the support they need. Community organisations, schools, faith leaders, and youth programmes all have an important role to play in creating safer neighbourhoods. But, Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we must also recognise that those efforts are strengthened by a justice system that commands public confidence and has the legal tools necessary to respond effectively when serious offences occur.

So, in my view, Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what this Bill seeks to achieve. One of the provisions I particularly welcome is the introduction of investigation anonymity. (And if I say that where I roll, Mr. Speaker, I was up last night putting this together and I could not pronounce it. So, I practiced a lot. So, anonymity.)

The Speaker: Anonymity.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Anonymity orders.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I did. Anonymity orders.

Witness anonymity orders in appropriate cases involving serious criminal investigations and proceedings.

For many years, Mr. Speaker, one of the greatest obstacles to securing successful prosecutions has not really been a lack of evidence. In my experience now, the evidence is there. People do not want to give evidence. People are afraid to give evidence. People give evidence and change their positions. So, fear is a real issue in us trying to bring perpetrators to justice.

Too often, individuals who want to do the right thing find themselves weighing their civic responsibility against concerns for their own safety and the well-being of their families. This Government has increased rewards through Crime Stoppers to help in trying to entice people to come and give evidence. It has gone from \$50,000 for evidence leading to conviction, Mr. Speaker . . . from \$10,000 (I should say) to \$50,000. And people are still having trouble coming forward because they value their life and the lives of their family more than giving proper evidence that could help do what is necessary.

In order for us to bring dangerous offenders to court, Mr. Speaker, we have to do what . . . we have to support this Bill, because when we do these kinds of things, when we support these kinds of initiatives, that is directly out of the anti-violence strategy or inextricably bound to it. (That is another word that I had trouble with last night: inextricably bound to it.) Justice is not only denied to victims. Communities are left with the perception that intimidation can silence the truth. That is something no society committed to the rule of law, Mr. Speaker, can accept.

So, for that reason, I support the measures contained within this Bill that allow the courts, in carefully defined circumstances, to protect the identity of witnesses where doing so is necessary and appropriate.

I have heard the speaker who just sat down and the Junior Minister make it clear that this feature is not for everyone. The judge will determine who gets the privilege of anonymity. So, it is equally important to recognise that these protections are neither automatic, as I stress, nor unrestricted. They are subject to judicial oversight and may only be granted where strict statutory conditions have been satisfied.

That, Mr. Speaker, is an important safeguard. I have had conversations over these last couple of days about the law, and people having the right to face their accuser. Generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, I agree. But having the experience of what this gang culture actually is in Bermuda, in real terms . . . you know, a lot of times we sit in coffee shops and barber shops and other things and talk about the rights of, not only the victim, but the perpetrators. All that sounds good. All that, a lot of times, sounds intelligent. But if we are going to be able to get on top of what we are facing, right now, in this country, we have to be courageous. We have to be mindful that this Bill, in my opinion, is not targeted for all crime. We have been forced to look at this specifically because of what the gang culture is currently doing to our Island.

So as the Junior Minister explained, Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court must carefully consider every application before granting anonymity. So, to me, that demonstrates that these reforms have been carefully balanced. Protecting witnesses, and protecting the rights of defendants, are not really, Mr. Speaker, competing principles. A modern justice system must be capable of achieving both those aims. So, I believe this legislation strikes that balance in a thoughtful and responsible way. So again, I take my hat off to the Attorney General, and her team, for looking at it and seeing what we could come up with without eroding the rights of the perpetrator and/or the victim.

And I firmly believe, Mr. Speaker, that when the public has confidence that they can assist law enforcement, I firmly believe that we will get more people coming forward, more people giving evidence. I cannot tell you the amount of people in my former role who would tell me: *Minister, I know this, and I know that, but I'm not going to say nothing. Or I can't say nothing.* And you are always promising to look out for them and ensure their safety. But this kind of Bill here helps to achieve that end, in my opinion.

Another aspect of this Bill I strongly support is the enhanced protection afforded to those entrusted with administering justice and serving our institutions. That is the members of the justice system, our lawyers, our prosecutors, our jurors, I definitely agree with. And even police officers. We have to make sure that

everybody is safe, Mr. Speaker, without any kind of fear of intimidation.

Likewise, Members of this Honourable House. You know, times are changing, Mr. Speaker. And I have had conversations, and there have been conversations about what kind of protections even for Members of the Honourable House can receive on a day-to-day basis. So, this is a new Bermuda. But this is not calling the situation dire. It is just about modernising our laws. And I must stress that while Bermuda has fortunately avoided many of the incidents that we hear [about] and see elsewhere, we cannot ignore the reality that public officials across the world increasingly face harassment, intimidation and in some cases violence, simply for carrying out their lawful responsibilities. We see these kinds of things on the news more and more now.

And what I am saying is that we need to be proactive rather than reactive and wait until something happens here. So good government is not about waiting for problems to emerge, Mr. Speaker. It is about anticipating future risks and ensuring that our laws provide appropriate protections before those risks become entrenched.

So, these are some of the reasons I welcome the provisions creating specific offences to the intimidation and assault of judicial officers, prosecutors and members of our Legislature. So, some of these measures, Mr. Speaker, are not designed to shield public officials, as I have read the Bill, from criticism. Robust debate, public scrutiny, and respectful disagreement remain essential features of every healthy democracy. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, in my opinion, they help strengthen our democratic institutions. There is an important distinction between legitimate criticism and conduct that is intended to intimidate, threaten, or interfere with those responsible for administering justice or carrying out public duties.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I take my seat, I want to say that this legislation recognises that we have to modernise our approach to crime right now in Bermuda, and I think this legislation has been put together in an appropriate and a measured way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Richardson.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good evening to you, sir.

The Speaker: Good evening.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, my final posting in the Bermuda Police Service was as criminal intelligence officer with specific responsibilities. And, as such, I had access to certain facts about our gang combating strategy and tools. I will attempt to walk the line

and not disclose anything from that career. Suffice it to say that I have played, and continue to support, the role of our crime fighters in this space.

Subsequent to my career in that area of criminal intelligence, I did move on, and now most of my reading still revolves around organised crime, mostly international or transnational organised crime relating to the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing in our jurisdiction.

Mr. Speaker, I am following my colleague, MP Pearman, in his contribution relating to witness anonymity and this Bill. This Bill has to be supported. The pervasive nature of criminal activity in our Island disrupts not just every good part of our Island, but even the mediocre, random, and small things of our lives are made that much harder by criminal conduct. I actually feel quite strongly about it. But this House has its dignity, and I will therefore restrain myself when it comes to talking about criminals.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge that fear of giving evidence is a credible threat to our criminal justice system. We are a small, small jurisdiction and it is not hard for our criminal justice system to be countered by even rudimentary organised crime by way of, amongst others, witness intimidation. But, Mr. Speaker, if we are going to talk about this Bill as a matter arising because of the increased threat of gang and gang activity in prosecuting their criminal activities, it is worth taking a step back and looking at our overall legislative strategy in this area. Because I think what it would do is give the Government a better direction of travel, which would assist in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, criminal laws that touch on gang activity are typically, in Bermuda, after the fact. They are increasing penalties, they create aggravating offences or aggravating circumstances, they effectively just make the criminal conduct that already occurred be penalised worse. There is little legislation that deals directly with organised crime enterprises or disrupting organised crime enterprises.

I bring that up because Bermuda is a small community, and anonymity is going to be a useful tool. I say that with a bit of a heavy heart, because it goes against certain legal principles that I think any member of the wider legal fraternity (I am not an attorney) . . . those are principles that one carries with them. And they try to hold those dear in their participation in our legal framework. Nonetheless, giving evidence in Bermuda is a hard thing in such a small place, when the risks are so high.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would add that that goes to the point of evidence, and how evidence gets admitted into our courts, and how prosecution takes place, and how people are convicted. One of the things people say in Bermuda a lot is: *Well, if you know who they are, why don't you just go get them?* Well, that is because knowledge is not . . . knowledge itself is not admissible in court. It requires a transmission, a translation, as it were, Mr. Speaker. And it is in that admission, it is in

that translation that we in a small community face our biggest problem, which this Bill is attempting, or starting to attempt, to fix.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak to some of the things that we can do that will enhance this Bill, because this Bill is in the right direction. But it has to go a lot further than this, because right now this Bill is addressing witness evidence, Mr. Speaker. Eyewitnesses, victims, admissions. The Honourable Member who just took his seat spoke to witness statements that go in. They get withdrawn. It is a very nebulous area. A very difficult area. And when you are trying to protect witnesses, as was part of my former mandate, in an environment where they are toe-to-toe with the offenders, they have every right to acknowledge, and see, and feel the threat. But there are other forms of evidence that investigations should be able to bring to the court.

Right now, our Evidence Act and our Police and Criminal Evidence Act are working together. Police and Criminal Evidence Act, I want to say 2006, came in and radically changed how we did policing in Bermuda. But it did not go far enough, Mr. Speaker, because forensic evidence, such as, DNA, fingerprints, ballistics, et cetera, pathology, and toxicology, are areas that we have been having problems with. We have seen that in the media.

But one of the areas that (and I really have to work carefully on this one) . . . that we ought to be very good at, and we have every . . . we are capable of being good at, is digital and electronic evidence, most specifically relating to things like GPS and telecommunications. Equally, documentary evidence, physical evidence, et cetera.

But my point, Mr. Speaker, is that this Bill is strengthening one piece, one evidential path, which is the witness. And if this Government seeks to challenge the legal principle behind a person who is innocent until proven guilty—their right to face their accuser—I think that some of the evidence that has to be brought before this House would include things like: How many investigations failed because witnesses refused to cooperate? How many witnesses withdrew statements? How many murder or firearms prosecutions were discontinued because witnesses would not testify? How many acquittals were substantially attributable to witness intimidation? And how many prosecutions relied solely or principally on civilian eyewitness rather than forensic evidence?

These are some of the statistics that would enable the House to justify creating a statute which infringes upon what an attorney would call an ancient legal right.

Mr. Speaker, the legislative gaps in our framework in combating organised crime are in the areas of the evidence, as I have been working towards. Areas that we have to sort of keep going on. And I hope that the Honourable Attorney General, who deserves credit for bringing this matter forward (as I am echoing my colleague MP Pearman), . . . We need a statutory

framework relating to covert human intelligence sources; modern communications data acquisition, including metadata, traffic data, subscriber information; real-time and historical digital communications orders; explicit tracking. I could go on, but I fear that talking too much on too many of these points would not be conducive to securing the things that we have in Bermuda in place at the moment.

Suffice it to say that one of the things that we admired in my time was the UK's regulation of the Investigatory Powers Act that regulated directed surveillance, intrusive surveillance, covert human intelligence sources, communications data intercepts, and matters such as that. Now that has largely been replaced by the Investigatory Powers Act, which covers the same area, but includes internet connection records and other matters of technological importance.

The reason why I think that these are the paths to take in addition to the witness development, is because these areas are immediately available. And we often have the expertise necessary to undertake it. But what we need to have is the statutory ability that this House could bring, which would allow for the ease of converting knowledge—or, in this case, intelligence—into admissible evidence. That is how we can interdict criminal activity in this Island and ensure that the cases that are brought before the courts are sufficiently robust. That is incredibly difficult, because Mr. Speaker, witnesses—eyewitnesses, especially—form only one part of what is a complex web, when we are prosecuting these areas.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I would also add that there is a problem with this legislation that I trust the Honourable Attorney General to attend to. And that is obviously that Bermuda is a very, very, very, very small place. Our court buildings are limited. Our parking to get to those court buildings is limited. The entrances, exit, egress to those buildings is limited. The timings of trials are typically publicly known. And that means that . . . and there are also multiple people fulfilling roles within the court process. This includes not only jurors and judges and clerks. It includes bailiffs and corrections officers, police officers. It is a very full place, a court that is trying a matter, and people are coming and going.

And given the size of Bermuda, given the relative little geographic distribution, I could see how easy it would be for anonymity to be lost. And so, to that end, I think that it is crucial that before using this power, that we ensure the security of the courts is maintained. Because as it stands right now, it is an incredibly porous environment, and that information gets out quite easily.

So, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I would just wrap up with by repeating that I think the direction of travel, is right. I think that there is further to go. I think that what we . . . what the next stage, if we are working on developing evidence and admissible evidence into the court, is that we should be working on data points, which are more readily available. That would also

reduce the necessity for us to rely on witnesses, thereby increasing the safety of those witnesses.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

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

Junior Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I know after hearing the comments . . . and I thank my colleague MP Weeks, and the comments from the Opposition, hearing the support in general for this, Mr. Speaker. So, as I said, hearing that, I will now move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's me.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Yes.

House in Committee at 10:18 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

The Chairman: Thank you, Sergeant.

Members, we are now in Committee of the Whole [House] on the Bill entitled [Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026](#).

Minister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I would like to . . .

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes. Okay.

I would like to move the clauses. And being that there is not a lot, can I do (I would like to separate them, though) clauses 1 and 2 first, and then [clauses] 3 to 6. Is that okay? Okay.

The Chairman: Members, it has been moved that we consider clauses 1 and 2.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Madam Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Evidence Act 1905, the Criminal Code Act 1907, and the Bail Act 2005 to make provision to effectively address the escalating crisis of gang violence in Bermuda.

Clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends the Evidence Act 1905 by inserting a new Part, (Roman numeral) IVB, sections 68F to 68Y, to "introduce investigation anonymity order" and "witness anonymity order." In particular, new sections 68F to 68H provide for interpretation. A "qualifying offence" is a serious, arrestable offence under section 3 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 2006. A "qualifying criminal investigation" is one conducted with a view to ascertaining whether a person should be charged with, or is guilty of, such an offence.

New sections 68I to 68K empower a magistrate on application by the Commissioner of Police, or the Director of Public Prosecutions, and without notice to a suspect, to grant an investigation anonymity order prohibiting the disclosure that a person is able or willing to assist a qualifying criminal investigation. The magistrate must be satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for believing that a qualifying offence has been committed, and that the person fears intimidation or harm, and can provide information that would assist, and is more likely than not to do so if the order is made. Innocent disclosure, disclosure within the investigation or prosecution, and disclosure required by law or court order are not contraventions.

New sections 68L and 68M provide for an appeal to the Supreme Court against a refusal to make an order, and for discharge of an order, where there has been a material change of circumstances.

New sections 68N to 68Q empower the Supreme Court, on the application of the prosecutor or the defendant, to make a witness anonymity order protecting a witness's identity at trial through measures including a withheld name, a pseudonym, restrictions on questioning, screening and voice modulation. The witness must remain visible and audible to the judge and jury. The court may make an order only where the measures are necessary, consistent with the defendant receiving a fair trial and required in the interest of justice, and must weigh the defendant's right to know the identity of a witness, whether the evidence might be so or decisive, whether it can properly be tested without disclosure, any motive of the witness to be dishonest and whether lesser measures would suffice.

New section 68R requires the judge on a trial with a jury to warn the jury so that the making of the order does not prejudice the defendant.

New sections 68S to 68U provide for the discharge of variation of a witness anonymity order during proceedings after proceedings have ended, and by the court of appeal on an appeal by the defendant.

New sections 68V to 68Y preserve public interest immunity at common law [and] require the Director of Public Prosecutions to review the operation of this Part and report to both Houses within three years; make it an offence punishable by a fine of \$100,00, or 10 years imprisonment, or both, to disclose information in contravention of either order and empower the Minister to make regulations.

Those are clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2?

There are no other persons.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that those be approved, clauses 1 and 2.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we approve clauses 1 and 2.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, I would suggest that since you are doing an amendment on clause 3, to do it by itself.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, I will.

The Chairman: Yes. Okay.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay.

I will now move clauses 3 through 6.

The Chairman: No, do it by itself.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Oh, [clause] 3. Right. Yes, yes.

Clause 3 amends the Criminal Code Act [1907] by inserting a new section 310A, creating offences of assault on, and intimidation of, a judicial officer, a prosecutor, or a Member of the Legislature. Assault on an official in the execution of his duty, five years on a summary conviction, 25 years on indictment. Retaliatory assault on an off-duty official, five years summary conviction, 15 years in indictment. And threats against an official, five years for summary conviction, and 10 years on indictment. No prosecution may be instituted without the consent of the director of public prosecutions.

The Chairman: Minister, do not forget that you wish to amend this clause.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

I wish to amend clause 3.

Can I proceed?

The Chairman: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay.

The Chairman: Read the amendment.

AMENDMENT TO CLAUSE 3

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that the Bill be amended in clause 3, in the new section 310A(5) of the Criminal Code Act 1907 by (a)—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —by (a), yes. By—

a) deleting the full stop after the words “a member of the Legislature” and substituting a semicolon; and

b) inserting after paragraph (c)—

“(d) a person who is serving as a juror.”

The Chairman: Okay.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: That is the amendment.

The Chairman: Okay.

All those in favour of the amendment?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

The Chairman: Ayes. Okay.

No objections?

An Hon. Member: No objection.

The Chairman: The amendment is moved.
Continue.

[Motion carried: Amendment to clause 3 passed.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Clause . . . I will now move clause—

The Chairman: Would you like to move clause 3 as amended?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I would like to move clause 3 as amended.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we approve clause 3 as amended.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

[Motion carried: Clause 3 passed as amended.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

I would now like to move clauses 4 through 6.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we . . . you want to consider clauses 4 through—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clauses 4 through 6.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Clause 4 amends the Bail Act 2005. New section 10A makes the wilful or unlawful breach of police bail an offence, a fine of \$3,000 or 12 months imprisonment; bail in criminal proceedings, a fine of \$25,000 or three years imprisonment, subject to the consent of the director of public prosecutions.

New section 14B permits a bail decision of the Magistrates' Court in respect of a relevant offence to be referred to the Supreme Court for a full rehearing by the defendant within seven working days where bail is refused, and by the prosecutor within four working days where bail is granted over the prosecutor's objection. The Supreme Court may confirm, reverse or modify the decision.

Clause 5 applies the amendments made by clause 2 to criminal investigations and proceedings that begin, or that have begun but not ended, on or after the commencement of that clause.

Clause 6 provides that the Act shall come into operation on such date or dates as the Minister responsible for Justice may appoint by notice published in *The [Official] Gazette*.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak to clauses 4 through 6?

There being no other persons.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 4 through 6 be considered.

The Chairman: Approved.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Approved, yes.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 4 through 6 be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 4 through 6 passed.]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay. I move the preamble. Right?

The Chairman: Preamble.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Okay. I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed or amended.

The Chairman: It has been—

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Oh, as amended.

The Chairman: Yes.

It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as amended.

Are there any objections?

There are none; so moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the Whole House and passed as amended.]

House resumed at 10:29 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 being reported to the House as amended?

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: There are none.

The matter has been reported to the House as amended. Thank you.

The next item, [Order] No. 8, the Motion by the Premier is being carried over.

[Order] No. 9, the Motion by Minister Furbert is carried over.

And that now moves us to the Bill by the . . . the Bills, two Bills, by the Opposition.

Opposition, are we going to do item . . . Oh.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Point of information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: You will recall that there was an agreement for us to do [Order] No. 2—

The Speaker: Yes. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —and moving it short notice?

The Speaker: Members, we are seeking the indulgence of the House to do the matter that the Minister of Health tabled this morning, that we, that was agreed that it would be done for the readings today, all readings.

Any objection?

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

The Honourable and Learned Minister of Health has raised this Bill with us, and we are agreeing to a first, second, and third reading all today on this Bill.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 29(1)

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 29(1) be suspended to enable the House to proceed with the second reading of the Bill entitled Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 29(1) suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Continue, Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, before I start, I certainly want to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Opposition for allowing me to go short on this Bill, moving one, two, and three readings in the same sitting. They obviously recognise the importance of this Bill and the benefits that it will behold to individuals that are awaiting kidney transplantation.

BILL**SECOND READING****HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026**

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, end-stage renal disease has a profound impact on a person's health, quality of life and ability to participate fully in our community. Because local health insurance finances the majority of care in Bermuda, the level of coverage available to an individual largely determines which renal replacement therapy they are able to access. The Mutual Re-insurance Fund [MRF] currently mandates coverage for three renal replacement therapies, namely, peritoneal dialysis, haemodialysis, and kidney transplantation. Peritoneal dialysis and haemodialysis are available on the Island and fully covered by the MRF.

Kidney transplantation, however, must be performed overseas, and the MRF benefit is presently capped at \$150,000 towards the total cost. Mr. Speaker, peritoneal dialysis costs approximately \$112,000 per year, and about \$1.1 million over a 10-year period, and is clinically appropriate for only a limited number of patients. Haemodialysis, on the other hand, which is the most commonly used therapy here in Bermuda, costs approximately \$135,000 annually, or \$1.4 million over 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, by comparison, kidney transplantation costs approximately \$387,000, inclusive of surgery and associated care. With an average graft survival of 10 years, this equates to an annualised cost of roughly \$38,700 and represents a savings of more than \$1 million per patient over a 10-year period, when compared with long-term haemodialysis. And for suitable candidates, transplantation is both the clinically preferred option, and the most cost-effective therapy over the long term.

Mr. Speaker, despite these clear advantages, the current mandated benefit of \$150,000, combined with supplemental insurance coverage that typically provides only approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000 leaves many patients facing substantial out-of-pocket costs. These costs create a significant barrier to transplantation and result in continued reliance on dialysis therapies that are fully insured but considerably more expensive.

Mr. Speaker, there are presently 91 patients who are clinically eligible for transplant assessment. Many have indicated that anticipated out-of-pocket expenses are a major factor influencing their willingness or ability to proceed. Increasing the legislative [level] of coverage would remove this barrier, improve access to the most clinically appropriate treatment, enhance the quality of life and reduce long-term costs to the health system.

Mr. Speaker, claims data shows that the average cost of transplantation is approximately \$387,000. However, actual costs may vary depending on case management needs, patient health status, hospital market conditions, the international location of the transplant centre and whether the donor is living or deceased. The proposed amendments therefore include flexibility to adjust the prescribed coverage amount through subordinate legislation, ensuring that coverage

remains aligned with real-world costs without requiring further amendments to the Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Would any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Sorry, I had . . . MP Cannonier was going to speak to the Bill, and he got me to sub in for him, and I had sort of forgotten he was back, and I am happy to sub in, but there we are. Anyway, we do not have much—

The Speaker: No, you both can—

Mr. Scott Pearman: We do not have a great deal to say.

The Speaker: You both can speak.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Let me just say that, you know, I am grateful to the Honourable Minister, Honourable and Learned Minister of Health, who did reach out to the Opposition, not only to invite us to agree to do this in first, second and third reading today, which we did, but also to explain that, you know, this is not just a piece of legislation. This is about someone's life. And we understand that. And, therefore, we did what we could to accommodate.

It would have been nicer, perhaps, if the Honourable Health Minister would have been able to debate this at the time of her other Bill this morning, but that's life, isn't it?

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I will just say two things.

One, is that the reason behind this change makes sense, as it has been explained to me by the Ministry, and that is this: We are increasing the amount that people who are getting urgent kidney transplants, which occurs in the United States, as I understand it. But we are getting more than commensurate savings (again, as it has been explained to me) on the other end, because then once the transplant is hopefully successful, there will be a reduction in dialysis costs. And so that may be a nuanced point, but it does make a lot of sense.

And the second and further thing I would just say is that neither MP Cannonier nor I are the substantive Shadow Minister for this topic, and so the substantive Shadow Minister for Health for the OBA sits in

another place, and may well have some additional observations, but that is all we have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I take that no other Member from the Opposition . . .

Any other Member from Government?
Deputy Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, first of all, I declare my interest. But I would also like to thank the Minister for bringing this here to us today. And let us not lose sight of the fact that this Government, with this change, continues to put money in the pockets of the people of this country. Let alone, hopefully, not only giving longevity to life, but maybe saving a life. So, thank you, Minister, for bringing this, and I am sure that there are a lot of Bermudians who are going to be really, really appreciative.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member?
Okay. Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank Honourable Members for their support on this incredibly important Bill, because it will certainly benefit individuals here in Bermuda.

And as such, I would move that this Bill be committed, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

House in Committee at 10:38 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Members, we are in Committee of Whole [House] on the Bill entitled the [Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would ask that we move both clauses, please.

The Chairman: It has been moved that we consider clauses 1 and 2.

Are there any objections?
There are none.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1 provides for the title of the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 3A of the Mutual Re-insurance Fund of the Health Insurance Act 1970 in

subsection (2E)(b) by increasing the maximum amount towards the cost of a kidney transplant from \$150,000 to \$400,000; and by inserting a new subsection (2J) to provide for the Minister responsible for Health to amend the maximum amount under subsection (2E)(b) by Order subject to the negative resolution procedure, following consultation with the Minister of Finance and the Bermuda Health Council.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 1 and 2?

There are none.

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be . . . clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 and 2 be approved.

Are there any objections?

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 and 2 passed.]

The Chairman: Continue.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

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

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So moved.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

House resumed at 10:40 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy [Speaker].

Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none. The Bill has been reported as printed.

Thank you.

We will now move on. We were at the two items by the Opposition.

Are you proceeding with [Order] No. 10?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: We are, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would you like to . . . [Order] No. 10. Members, it is the second reading of the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 in the name of MP Jerion Richardson on behalf of the Opposition.

Member, would you like to present your Bill at this time?

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill entitled Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections?

None. Continue.

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

BILL

SECOND READING

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, this Bill is short, but the principle behind it is large. It asks this House to consider how we protect public trust when politics, public money and government appointments meet. It asks us to consider whether the law should draw a line between standing unsuccessfully for election, and being appointed shortly thereafter to a publicly funded, personal staff position outside the ordinary public service process. It asks us, in simple terms, whether public confidence is best protected by goodwill alone or whether some matters of public trust require clear rules.

I bring this Bill because I believe the answer must be clear. Public trust is not preserved merely by asking people to trust those in office. It is preserved by rules, habits, and restraints that make trust reasonable. The people of Bermuda are entitled to know that public money is not being used, and does not appear to be used, as a reward for political loyalty. They are entitled

to know that the machinery of government belongs to the people, not to any political party. And they are entitled to know that when Parliament sees a gap in public confidence, Parliament is willing to close it.

Mr. Speaker, public office is not private possession. It is not a prize. It is not a party asset. Public office is trust. Every person who sits in this Honourable House holds office because the public has placed confidence in them. That confidence, though, is not unlimited. It must be earned and renewed, not only by words but by conduct, not only by assurances but by systems, not only by intention but by restraint. Restraint matters in public life, Mr. Speaker.

The fact that a government has power does not mean that every use of that power is wise. The fact that the law permits an appointment does not mean that the appointment will command public confidence. The fact that a role may be political in nature does not mean that the public purse can be treated casually. Public money is still public money, and even when it funds political support. Public confidence is still required even when an appointment is personal to a Minister, the Premier or the Opposition Leader.

People do not lose their trust in politics all at once, Mr. Speaker. They lose it slowly. They lose it when they repeatedly see the line between party interest and public interest become blurred. They lose it when they begin to believe that connection matters more than competence. They lose it when public opportunity appears to travel through private networks, rather than open standards. And they lose it when those in power respond to concern, not with reform, but with dismissal.

That loss of trust should concern us all, Mr. Speaker. It should concern the Government. It should concern the Opposition. It should concern every Member who values this House, and every office that depends upon public confidence. It is not enough for any of us to say that our motives are pure. Government must not only act lawfully, it must act in a way that sustains the legitimacy of the system. Mr. Speaker, political parties are necessary in any democracy. Candidates are necessary in a democracy. Campaigning is necessary in a democracy. There is nothing wrong with party loyalty. There is nothing wrong with political conviction. There is nothing wrong with a person standing before the people carrying a banner advancing a platform and asking for support.

But there is a difference between a party and a government. A party may win an election, but the government it forms does not belong to the party. It belongs to the people. The public purse belongs to the people. The offices of government belong to the people. The machinery of administration belongs to the people. And appointments funded by the people must be treated with the seriousness that public money demands.

That is the distinction this Bill seeks to protect. The issue is not whether a person has political views. Everyone in this House has political views. The issue is

not whether a Minister may need advice. Ministers may need advice. The issue is not whether political offices may need support. They may. The issue is whether there should be a period of distance between an unsuccessful candidacy and appointment to a publicly funded personal staff role outside of the ordinary public service framework.

Mr. Speaker, the existing Act already recognises that personal staff appointments are sensitive. They are not ordinary public service appointments. They are publicly funded, but they are close to political office holders. They may involve political advice. They may involve media, policy, communications, or personal support for those exercising public power. They sit in a space where politics and public money meet.

That is precisely why they require transparency and restraint. When the framework for personal staff was introduced, transparency was part of the argument for it. The public was told that annual publication of appointments and remuneration would help demystify these roles. The law itself requires the Premier, by a fixed annual date, to lay reports before the Legislature identifying the personal staff, their functions, their remuneration, and, in the case of ministerial staff, whether they were appointed as experts or political advisors.

That reporting requirement was not a decorative provision. It was a safeguard. But a safeguard that arrives years late cannot fully protect trust. Transparency after the fact has value, but transparency years after the fact cannot guide public judgment when it matters. If a report that should be tabled annually is missing for years, then the public cannot see in time who is serving, what role they are serving, what they are being paid, and whether the appointments appear proper. In that circumstance, the issue is not merely administrative delay, Mr. Speaker. The issue is whether the system of accountability is working when the public needs it to work.

Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the Honourable Member for Warwick North East, and Shadow Minister of Finance, has pressed this very issue. He has pursued the production of these personal staff reports. He has asked why reports required by law were not produced on time. He has insisted that information Parliament was promised should actually be made available to Parliament and the public. That, Mr. Speaker, is the proper work of an Opposition. It is not obstruction. It is scrutiny. It is not small politics. It is accountability.

Public reporting has confirmed the concern. Reports came belatedly before Members. Early reports remain outstanding. The statutory deadline was not met. That matters, Mr. Speaker, because this House cannot rely on transparency as the only safeguard if transparency is not timely. The public cannot be asked to wait years to understand the use of public money in roles so close to political office. That is why this Bill does not rely on reporting alone, Mr. Speaker. Reporting is important. Disclosure is important. Annual

accountability is important. But disclosure after the facts is not enough where public confidence requires a clear rule at the point of an appointment.

This Bill, therefore, moves from delayed transparency to prior restraint. It says that some appointments should not be made in the first place. Mr. Speaker, standing for election is honourable. Losing an election is not dishonourable. Anyone who places their name before the voters accepts scrutiny, pressure, and the possibility of rejection. That takes courage. I do not diminish that, and this Bill does not diminish that. But there is a mischief this Bill addresses. The mischief is not political participation. The mischief is not democratic engagement. The mischief is not public service. The mischief is the immediate movement, or perceived movement, from unsuccessful candidacy into publicly funded political employment, outside the ordinary public service process. That is the concern.

This Bill does not say that unsuccessful candidates are unqualified. It says that public confidence requires distance between the ballot paper and publicly funded appointments. It says that the public should not have to wonder whether a person was appointed because of merit, expertise, and public need, or because of recent political service to a party. It says that the public should not have to wonder whether losing an election has become a route into public employment. It says that the public should not have to wonder whether public money is being used to cushion public defeat.

Appearances matter in public life, because confidence matters, Mr. Speaker. Government depends not only on legal authority, but on public legitimacy. A system may be technically lawful and still damage trust. A decision must be explainable, and still look unfair. An appointment may be defensible in private and still corrode confidence in public. Parliament must sometimes legislate, not only against proven abuse, but against avoidable suspicion.

That is what this Bill does. It draws one clear line. It says that a person who has stood unsuccessfully in a general election or bye-election should not, for two years, be appointed to, or hold, a personal staff position under the Premier, Ministers, and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill is narrow, neutral, time-limited, and enforceable. It creates a two-year cooling-off period for unsuccessful candidates. During that period, a person who stood unsuccessfully for election may not be appointed to, or hold, a personal staff appointment under the Act. The Bill applies whether the person stood as a party candidate or an Independent candidate. It applies regardless of the political party by which the person was endorsed. It applies to personal staff of the Premier, Ministers, and the Opposition Leader.

It requires a written declaration of eligibility before appointment. It creates consequences if that declaration is knowingly false. And it requires the Parliamentary Registrar to keep the records necessary to

verify whether a person falls within the rule. That is not excessive, Mr. Speaker. It is not a lifetime ban. It is not a ban on employment. It is not a ban on public service. It is not a ban on political belief. It is a cooling-off period for one narrow category of publicly funded political appointments.

Two years is measured. A permanent restriction would go too far. A restriction so short that it had no practical effect would not address the concern. Two years is long enough to break the immediate link between an unsuccessful candidacy and a personal staff appointment, and short enough to respect the ability of individuals to return to eligibility.

The Bill also contains practical safeguards, Mr. Speaker. A declaration must be made, records must be available, the rule can be checked. It is not left to rumour, speculation or political argument. The law should be clear enough that no Minister, no Premier, no Opposition Leader, and no proposed appointee is left guessing. That is good governance.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear about what the Bill does not do. It does not stop anyone from joining a political party. It does not stop anyone from campaigning. It does not stop anyone from standing for election. It does not stop anyone from supporting a candidate. It does not stop anyone from holding political views. It does not stop anyone from applying for ordinary public service employment through the proper process. It does not impose a permanent ban. It does not target one party. It does not punish participation in democracy.

It protects democracy from the appearance of patronage. That distinction is important. If someone wishes to serve Bermuda through public service, let them apply through the public service process. If someone has expertise, let that expertise be tested through an appropriate route. If someone wishes to continue contributing to public life, there are many ways to do so. But this particular route, Mr. Speaker, the immediate appointment to publicly funded personal staff after an unsuccessful election campaign should be closed for a reasonable period of time.

Mr. Speaker, the One Bermuda Alliance brings this Bill forward as a matter of principle. Not as a rule for one side only, not as a rule for one government only, not as a rule for one controversy only. The Bill binds the Opposition Leader as well as the Premier and Ministers. This is deliberate. If we are going to speak about standards, then those standards must bind us too. It is easy to call for integrity when the rule applies only to one's opponents. It is harder and more important to write a rule that applies to all of us. That is what this Bill does.

A future Opposition Leader could not use a personal staff appointment to give an immediate, publicly funded role to an unsuccessful OBA candidate. A future OBA Government could not use these appointments in the way the Bill seeks to prevent. A future government of any party would be subject to the same rule. A future

Independent candidate would be subject to the same rule. That is not a weakness of the Bill; it is the point of the Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Integrity is not a slogan. Transparency is not a press release. Accountability is not something we remember only when convenient. They must be built into rules. The OBA is prepared to be bound by the rule it proposes. That is the standard we should set.

Mr. Speaker, I anticipate that some Honourable Members may say that political advisors are supposed to be political, and yes, they are. But publicly funded political roles still require integrity safeguards. The fact that a role is political does not mean the public interest disappears.

Some may say that reporting already exists. Yes, it does. But reporting has not been enough. Late disclosure does not prevent an appointment. A report years later does not protect confidence at the time when the concern arises. Reporting tells the public what happened.

This Bill prevents a narrow category of appointments that should not happen during the cooling-off period. Some say that this Bill is partisan. It is not. It applies to Government and Opposition. It applies to party candidates and Independents. It applies regardless of party endorsement, and it applies now and in the future.

Some may say that this discourages people from standing for election. It does not. A person may stand, a person may still campaign, a person may still support a party, a person may still seek public employment through the ordinary processes. The Bill simply says that unsuccessful candidacies should not be followed immediately by this narrow category of publicly funded personal appointments.

And some may say that the Bill is unnecessary, Mr. Speaker. If public trusts were not at risk, perhaps that argument would carry more weight. But we all know the state of public confidence in politicians. We all hear the public frustration. We all hear the suspicion that politics looks after its own. We can either pretend that concern is not real, or we can take one practical step to answer it.

If this Bill is read a second time and committed to Committee, I will approach that stage constructively. If Honourable Members have technical amendments to improve the Bill without weakening its purpose, I will consider them. If there are drafting improvements, let us examine them. If there are refinements that make the Bill clearer, stronger, or more workable, let us consider them at the proper stage.

But technical criticism should not be used to avoid the principle. The question today is the principle. The details can be improved. The lines should not be erased, though. The principle is straightforward. Unsuccessful candidates should not move directly into publicly funded personal staff appointments outside of the ordinary public service process.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will not solve every problem of patronage in Bermuda. It will not answer every

concern about procurement. It will not address every board appointment. It will not restore public trust by itself. But it draws one clear line.

Mr. Speaker, it says that public office is a trust. It says that public money is not party money. It says that the machinery of government must not appear to become a reward system for political loyalty. Mr. Speaker, it says that transparency years late is not enough. It says that where public confidence requires restraint, Parliament should write that restraint into law.

Mr. Speaker, the public is entitled to expect that we will protect the integrity of the offices we hold. They are entitled to expect that the rules will not simply rely on goodwill. They are entitled to expect that when a gap appears, Parliament will close it.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill closes one gap. It does so modestly. It does so fairly. It does so equally. And it does so in a way that binds both the Opposition as well as the Government. Mr. Speaker, that is the principle of this Bill. And that is the principle I ask this Honourable House to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of you, I can assure you I will not be as long as the Honourable Member who just took his seat.

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Hon. E. David Burt: Just to, I will lead—

The Speaker: I am sure all will appreciate that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I will certainly lead on behalf of the Government on this particular matter. But [I] just want to make sure to correct the record, because the Honourable Member who just took his seat said when the Bill was first brought, it contained transparency provisions. It did not. The Bill did not contain transparency provisions. Transparency was only added in there in 2018 or 2019 by this Government when we amended and updated the Bill. The Premier, [Ministers] and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act existed long before. It was an invention of the late Sir John Swan.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ah!

Hon. E. David Burt: He already appointed personal staff and there was no transparency provisions in there whatsoever. And the only way that you found out about it is by asking a parliamentary question, which you still have the opportunity to do.

But let me consider it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government will vote against this Bill, and

we will do so without hesitation. And I listened to the Honourable Member speak for a long time, and I am still trying to understand what the problem is that he is trying to solve. It is though that this Bill is a solution in search of a problem. And my job, and my training [for] years as an IT project manager, and as someone who analyses requirements, it is always going to: *What is the problem that you are trying to solve?* I am not certain of the problem that he is trying to solve.

Worse than that, Mr. Speaker, it is a bad solution. It is without question, poorly targeted. It is retrospective in its effect, if you could possibly imagine that. That, you know, passing this Bill and all of a sudden other persons may, you know, *whatever you were doing, you are not going to do anymore*. And even though the Honourable Member does not think so, I think it is without question fundamentally hostile to political participation.

But let me be clear about what this Bill says. It says that if a Bermudian has the courage to put their name on a ballot, go before the people, and does not win, that person should be prohibited from serving as a political advisor for two years. Now, let that sink in. Not because they committed misconduct. Not because they were dishonest. Not because they are unqualified. Their offence, Mr. Speaker, their disqualifying factor is they stood for an election and lost. That is nonsense.

And here is what makes the least amount of sense, Mr. Speaker. Under this Bill, someone can manage a political campaign, someone can run the party organisation, someone can work behind the scenes,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ah! Ah!

Hon. E. David Burt: —someone can raise all the money, someone can do all the types of stuff inside the party, do everything; advise candidates, participate in every aspect of politics, and remain perfectly eligible for appointment. But if you then decide to put your name forward and lose the answer is no. A nonsense, Mr. Speaker. Again, I am uncertain of the problem that the Opposition is trying to solve.

So, I am not going to spend too much time on this, Mr. Speaker, because I know that other persons do. I think it is important to note, and understand, that the construct of special advisors, political advisors, expert advisors is not new. Personal staffs, as I said, were brought into law under the late Sir John Swan. Those things were expanded, used, they became formalised underneath the Ministerial Code of Conduct, which was put in place (I want to say) in 1999, which allows Ministers to appoint up to two advisors. There were further transparency measures that were brought in along of the time. But the important thing to note, Mr. Speaker . . . and it is also important to note that special advisors were always allowed under these particular Acts. They just were not fully governed under these particular Acts.

And so, what we did is we made sure that there was a broader governance around them. But again, the existing law already provides that Ministers may

appoint experts in their professional fields, or advisors. These appointments must be made in writing. Conflicts of interest were considered. All persons do serve terms of, codes of conduct, because there are codes of conduct, that are applying to these particular matters, and we know that there is reporting on these, whether through parliamentary question or through annual reporting. So, we all know, Mr. Speaker, that the framework is transparent.

But this Bill does not strengthen those safeguards. It does not improve the standards, and it does not require qualifications. It does not do anything to enhance performance management. All it says is that if you run and you lose, you cannot have this particular job. It is, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, a nonsense.

Political advisors, or special advisors, or in the United Kingdom—SpAds, as they are commonly called too—are not some strange invention of the United Kingdom Government . . . or, sorry, the Bermuda Government. They exist throughout Westminster systems, whether it is Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other places. And the United Kingdom Cabinet Office describes special advisors as a critical part of the teams that are supporting Ministers. They work alongside professional civil servants, while providing the political advice that civil servants quite properly cannot provide.

So, to listen to the Honourable Member, he says that, you know, you should run for political office, and if you lose political office, then you should, already being tainted, then go ahead and apply for a position of public service, but you cannot apply for a position of public service after a run for office unless you have a cooling-off period that already exists. So, he is almost defeating his own argument, Mr. Speaker. And from that perspective and dimension is nonsense. As of March this year, the United Kingdom Government employed 159 different special advisors. I think we have got about 12 here.

But the reality is that they serve a useful purpose, Mr. Speaker. And why? Because there is a difference between political advice and public service advice. There is a difference. The public service must remain impartial, and Ministers who are elected to implement a political programme, it is entirely legitimate for Ministers to seek political advice on how that programme is developed. And I cannot imagine . . . well, I mean, remember, he is not excusing people who work inside of parties and all the rest, so clearly, Ministers want persons that they know they can trust to give them political advice that is aligned with their political views. And who else is better to do that than people who work in political parties or, Mr. Speaker, people who may put themselves forward for office.

But here is what's also important, and this is the sinister part about this for me, because I know, Mr. Speaker, that I served as a political advisor in my time. I started in 2010 until 2012. I know there are a number of Members behind me who served as a political

advisor under different administrations and different things. And the reality is that these roles also provide an important opportunity for Bermudians to learn how government actually functions. People learn how policies develop. They learn how legislation is prepared. They learn how Cabinets solve government work. They learn how Ministers. They learn the difference between making a promise and navigating the practical financial legal work required to deliver it, Mr. Speaker. They do this particular work.

And the reality is that this type of work, this type of exposure, produces better candidates, better parliamentarians, ultimately better leaders, and better Ministers for the country. That is the reality. And so, and so, it is—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, you can say as you wish. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that what this Bill is doing is basically saying: *Put yourself up and lose, no, no, no, but please feel free to work behind the scenes, whatever you need to do, all the rest, and then, yes, you are okay.*” It makes no sense.

And, Mr. Speaker, consider the retrospective effect, which is the most sinister part of this Bill. A person who may already be holding a legitimate appointment, performing valuable work already, and have done absolutely nothing wrong—absolutely nothing wrong—under this Bill, that appointment would be ended automatically. No assessment of performance, no evidence of wrongdoing, no consideration of public interest, just automatic dismissal. That is not good governance, Mr. Speaker. That is not good governance.

So again, I hope when the Honourable Member, former Leader of the Opposition, gets an opportunity to respond, he can try to tell us the actual problem that he is trying to solve, because it is difficult to understand the problem which he is trying to solve. The reality is that there is a limit to the number of special advisors that exist. That is something that is codified in the Ministerial Code of Conduct. Those persons are put into particular roles, decided by Ministers, under budgets that are approved by this particular Legislature.

And just so Honourable Ministers have an understanding of the way these particular matters work, they are governed by the Ministerial Code of Conduct. Ministers must write in to the Premier for approval. I will go ahead and review those particular items. I will then say: *This person is appropriate, yes; or appropriate, no.* Not every single political advisor that a Minister wants to hire that is given a yes. That is the reality. And there is the accountability matrix. And that is political accountability. And so, if Members have a question about who is appointed, and if they have something, they can come here, they can ask the parliamentary question, they can get up on the floor, they can do whatever it is. The accountability matrix of Parliament is the way in which it works.

But then to say that we are going to say: *No, you cannot do this, this, this, if you have done that.* It is a nonsense, Mr. Speaker. And that is why it will not be supported from this side. This Government will not support political gatekeeping, which is dressed up as reform. We are not going to support legislation that discourages Bermudians from standing in an election, and we are not going to pretend that electoral defeat is evidence of corruption, incompetence, or unfitness for any form of public service.

This House should legislate against wrongdoing. It should not legislate, Mr. Speaker, against losing. And for this reason, this Government will vote this unnecessary, illogical, and fundamentally misguided Bill down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP DeCouto, you have the floor.

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

I must admit, I thought the Premier was going to go short, but I guess he is got his energy back. I find it incredibly rich that the Premier would think he could get up here and lecture this House about accountability, when he is breaking the law by failing to provide three years of missing reports.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

This is what we are doing again?

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah!—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Required by law.

The Speaker: Ah! Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.

You raised a point of order?

[No audible response.]

The Speaker: You raised a point of order.

An Hon. Member: What is it?

The Speaker: No, no, it was a point of order. I was trying to sit the Member.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading, Imputing improper motive]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, point of order, whether it is on the matters of misleading the House, or matters that relate to imputing improper motive, the Honourable Member cannot accuse the Government of not following the law, Mr. Speaker.

On this particular point, I have explained the position very clearly. We have filed the last three years'

reports. There are two years' reports that are going back in time. If the Honourable Member wants to go ahead and pose a parliamentary question on those particular matters, he is more than welcome to do so. I have judged and I have stated on numerous occasions that I do judge that it is not in the best interest.

Do you know what happens?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: We can have . . . no, here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. We can have public servants go and run and find old items, or we can bring justice reform Bills and other Bills to this country. That is the way that I do. And so,—

An Hon. Member: Oh! Wow!

Hon. E. David Burt: —the Honourable Members may wish to do things.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: The reality is that that is it. So, the Honourable Member cannot get up, impute improper motives and accuse myself of breaking the law when he himself full well knows that I do not prepare those reports, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Before you resume your feet, I know this matter has come up numerous times. And I think we have exhausted it because the position that the Premier just stated has been repeatedly stated over and over again. And I think that we can move forward without having to keep going back down that same road, because the answer has been given as to how, why, et cetera, et cetera. The issue that you raise has been addressed the way it is been addressed. Okay?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate your guidance. I will carry on with my main point. But let me say this. The law provides no provision for the Premier to decide whether or not he provides those reports. And he has not provided those reports. It is a short Bill. Anybody can read it. If he does not wish to hear about it, he can provide those reports. I do not care about his explanation, frankly. It is not relevant.

The Speaker: I'm, I'm—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: But anyway, he wants to know—

The Speaker: I am trying to move us forward and not have to keep going back down this road on this matter.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I am sure you have got more you can present in your presentation and we can—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, well, I must admit the Premier must . . . I guess being Premier for a while, I think he may be a little bit out of touch with people. Because if he wants to understand what is the problem that this Bill solves, let me explain it to him, to this House. Let me readjust my tone and my . . . let me explain it to this House.

The Speaker: Explain it to the House, yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Speaker, earlier I talked about trust, and how, in my view, and people that talk to us talk about a lack of trust in the Government. There is a high level of cynicism in the public about how Government operates. Now, you might say: *Well, that is not unique to Bermuda.* Okay. And I will give you that. But it is very high in Bermuda right now.

This Bill uses the concept of a cooling off period. This is a very common concept used in a lot of places. It is a good idea. And it makes sense because the cynicism, what people are seeing, they are looking and they are saying: *Huh. Ace boy ran over there, didn't make it, and they got this cushy little job over here. Ace girl, same thing.* And they look around and they see all these people. *Oh, I get it. If I put my hand up to take one for the team, I'm going to go get a cushy little job running around with the—*

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Premier—Mr. Speaker, point of information.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Or, point of order, sorry.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Hon. Owen Darrell: The Honourable Member from the other side is imputing improper motive when he keeps using the term “cushy little job.” I find it extremely disrespectful for individuals who are working extremely hard.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that he withdraw the statements of describing hard-working individuals [receiving] “cushy little jobs.”

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I did not say these jobs like that, Mr. Speaker. I am just relaying the kinds of commentary that I [hear] out there in the public. So, I appreciate what the gentleman is saying. But, you know, this is what people think.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: This is what I am exactly what I mean by cynicism. It does not even have to be correct. And we know, Mr. Speaker, there is the concept of avoiding even the appearance of impropriety. And they say—

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Speaker: Wait, wait, wait.

Let your comments be not so . . . What am I trying to say here? Not so . . . almost demeaning of a process that was in place long before others, long before this Government came in, and they had these roles before. If you want to tighten up on it, talk to how you want to tighten up, but you do not have to be demeaning of those who participate in it.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. . . . well, I do want to tighten up. Because when the general public has a cynicism, we have to avoid even the appearance of impropriety by going above and beyond. It is like saying, if you are a judge, you cannot just go have lunch with whoever you want. It might be okay. You might just be talking golf. But someone might look at that and draw a conclusion.

And you have to make it clear to the public that everything is above board, because the public has developed a lack of trust and it will take extra work to get it back. And that . . . if the Premier does not understand that, because that was his question and I'm responding to his question, I don't really know what else to say.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: People would . . . people . . . this is, these are things . . . these are the worst people. *Oh, it is a friends and family plan. Or, jobs for the boys and girls.* And what we are trying to do is just take that variable out of it and it will reflect better on everybody.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And then people will know. Hey, the people who do these advisory roles, they will have more confidence in them. It will be clear to them why they have those roles. And those people will not be judged unfairly by the public who, as I mentioned, has developed this . . . this . . . this tone of cynicism. And the lack of accountability and transparency in these areas is not helping.

I do not want to . . . I do not want to touch that again. I think I have made my point.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I fully support this Bill because it will help people feel more confident in what is going on with the operations of their Government at a time of deep cynicism and mistrust.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member . . . Minister Rabain.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Again, repeating what the Premier said, there is absolutely no way that anyone in good conscience can stand there and accept what probably harkens us back to a dark age. A dark age in the development of this country. Where it was very well known that if you supported a particular party, you would have a very hard time finding employment, getting a job, buying a house and doing all of those things, Mr. Speaker. And I realise, Mr. Speaker, what are we really doing here? As the Premier said, we are looking for a problem. We are looking for a problem to find . . . to find . . . we are coming up with a solution that there is no actual problem for, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite that brought this Bill said something very interesting. He said: *This is not a partisan Bill.* Those are his exact words. I will wait for the point of order.

Mr. Speaker, I have never known a bipartisan Bill that has never reached across the aisle to say: *Let's talk about what we are doing so we can have common ground before we come to this House.* How can that be a nonpartisan [sic] Bill, Mr. Speaker? He has tabled this Bill without asking anyone: *What are your thoughts on this?* If he truly wanted to bring something here that was bipartisan, he would have reached across the aisle before he tabled this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we have Members opposite speaking about the illegality of not submitting reports on time that are required by Parliament. Mr. Speaker, all we have to do is go back to the One Bermuda Alliance era and realise that 2014/15 WEDCO reports were not submitted on time. [In] 2014/15 and 2016 BHB reports were not submitted on time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Uh-oh! Uh-oh!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The Regulatory Authority for 2014/15 and 2016 were not submitted on time.

An Hon. Member: No, no!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The regulatory . . . the regular . . . the National Training Board reports [were] not submitted in 2016 and 2017. And do you know when those reports were submitted, Mr. Speaker? After they lost the Government and the PLP came into power.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh my! Oh my!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, we can sit here . . . we are . . . but, Mr. Speaker, I am not speaking about that because I am trying to throw shade.

We have been here long enough to know that these reports are compiled by public servants, and

sometimes there are issues that go wrong that do not allow them to be reported. That is . . . that is common. And so, I am not going to use that to beat them on the back like the Member opposite who just took his seat refuses to stop trying to beat the Premier with. Because he is trying to make a point, because he is trying to stoke division in this country. By quoting what he said: *friends and family benefits for unqualified persons*, Mr. Speaker. *Cushy jobs*, Mr. Speaker. This is the type of things he does.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Minister, I have no doubt, is inadvertently imputing improper motive.

The Speaker: Put your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I know the Minister is inadvertently imputing improper motive because for a Member of this House to get up here and demand that a Minister carries out their duties under the law to provide information to this House is not stoking—

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —Mr. Speaker—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —is not stoking anything. And to relay what the public is saying to me again is not stoking anything. This is what people are saying. I do not make this up, Mr. Speaker.
Thank you.

The Speaker: All right. You expressed that when you were on your feet before.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
I was speaking about an actual statement he made, *cushy jobs*, Mr. Speaker. That is offensive. It is. *Cushy little jobs*. That is offensive. Reminds me of someone else who made a statement and called someone in this House *a wonderful little boy*.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: That is . . . that is the mentality that we are dealing with here today, Mr. Speaker, that harks—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —that harks from a past that we thought had been buried by now, Mr. Speaker. But

when you grew up in that . . . in that . . . in that era, you cannot change yourself, Mr. Speaker. You cannot change your spots.

But, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's history teaches us to be cautious about political participation when it comes linked to employment opportunities. Many Bermudians, especially Black Bermudians, grew up hearing stories of how political affiliation could affect your ability to just operate in this country. So whatever political views we have, the lesson from that period is that no citizen should fear consequences because they choose to participate in the political process, Mr. Speaker.

And as the Premier mentioned, why does this Bill draw the line at candidates, Mr. Speaker? And make me, and . . . and . . . and . . . and I will be I will be pleased,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased if they could explain how the staff for the Opposition Leader has been instrumental in every One Bermuda Alliance election. Every single one of them—instrumental.

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But they get hired. Why aren't people like that on this list? Why aren't people like that on this list, Mr. Speaker? Why, Mr. Speaker? Because this Bill is to stoke division. That is my opinion. To stoke division amongst the people of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

There is only one . . . there is, Mr. Speaker, there is only one Government that has ever been accused of the friends and family plan, Mr. Speaker. One Government. Amazingly, that fell away. Amazingly, that fell away when the One Bermuda Alliance was in power. Amazingly, it fell away. And all we have to do is look at the farcical, the farcical folly they went on trying to accuse Dr. Brown in Boston, Mr. Speaker. And who did they have working behind him? A political ally that did a whole lot of work for them behind the scenes, got hired up to push that prosecution forward, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they did.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: You didn't hear friends and family there, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Previously, I brought to this House when we talked about the things that were done,

and we did a comparison of how much money went out to . . . how much money went out to the legal firms under the One Bermuda Alliance. Far outstripped what the what the PLP had paid over the same period.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That was family.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: But there was no friends and family accused of that, Mr. Speaker. No friends and family accused there because, Mr. Speaker, as to quote, Mr. Speaker, as to quote, our late friend, and late great Member of this party: *For some reason, the White man's ice is colder.*

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, yes, sir.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, Mr. Speaker, good legislation should involve the people responsible for administering it. The fact that when I reached out to the Parliamentary Registrar to say: *What is your opinion on this Bill?* Because, yes, Mr. Speaker, we could have raised a similar argument that we talked about earlier,—

Hon. E. David Burt: Absolutely.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: —because this Bill requires the Parliamentary Registrar to create a registry, keep . . . keep and follow that registry of all the people who have run to say they have been off, they have now . . . they have not been employed for two years, so now they can go, Mr. Speaker. When I reached out to her to say: *Can I have your opinion on that?* Her words were: *This the first time I have ever seen this.*

So, we talk about collaboration, Mr. Speaker. You talk about collaboration, it is not there. You do not draft a Bill, and then just show up one day and table it, and then say it is bipartisan.

An Hon. Member: Like the Health Bill today.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Well, Mr. . . . and not to reflect on earlier debates, but I do remember kudos coming from that side of the Government about the conversations they had with the Minister who brought it, who brought it, and they were so grateful, and they supported it, and we will just leave it there, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: No, no, no, we had two Bills today that you supported, that you said: *I am grateful for the, for the Minister who reached out and talked to us.* And so we were able to move forward with it, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, Ministers are already required to consider conflicts of interest with

appointments. The Ministerial Code sets this clear of what the expectations are regarding integrity and accountability and transparency. If there are concerns with appointments, we should strengthen that transparency, not restrict participation in democracy.

So, Mr. Speaker, the greatest concern I have about this Bill is what it sends to the next generation. We constantly say we want more young people to get involved in the political process. We encourage them to participate, and we share their ideas to challenge us, to even put their names on ballots. But yet this Bill tells them that if they bother to step into that political arena, and they run in an election, and they are unsuccessful, opportunities that would be otherwise open to them will be closed for two years. How fair is that, Mr. Speaker? How fair is that to tell someone you are only—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: How fair is that, Mr. Speaker?

And we hear the chirping: *Are we going to give those opportunities to Opposition candidates?*

Mr. Speaker, I struck a partisan . . . a bipartisan board to examine electoral reform. There are . . . there are Opposition Members on that, Opposition failed candidates, on that board.

Some Hon. Members: Ah! Ah!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: There are Independent failed candidates on that board, Mr. Speaker. Right? So, they have been offered, they have been offered on that board and, yes, Mr. Speaker, there is a stipend that they will be paid for doing that work—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh! Oh!

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: And because I went . . . because true bipartisanship is reaching across the aisles, I have shown that it happens, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: That's the problem they are trying to solve.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: So, Mr. Speaker, we are sending the wrong message by passing this Bill. Future leaders of Bermuda do not begin as Ministers or Members of Parliament, Mr. Speaker. Many will start as researchers, advisors, campaign volunteers, constituency workers, or members of a Minister's team. That is the experience that helps them to develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to service our country effectively. The existing staffing framework specifically recognises the roles of political advisors,

Mr. Speaker, and allows them to support Ministers, and the Opposition.

So, Mr. Speaker, instead of passing Bills that restrict employment opportunities, we should be encouraging young Bermudans to put themselves out there, participate in the political process, run for office, knowing that they will not be punished for doing so, Mr. Speaker. Democracy is strongest when citizens are willing to step forward. It is strongest when young people believe that public service is a pathway for opportunity and not a risk. Losing an election should never mean a loss of opportunity in employment, Mr. Speaker. And for that reason, Mr. Speaker, I unequivocally will never support this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
MP Swan.

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

Mr. Speaker, I echo the Minister who just took his seat. I felt it necessary to take a page out of the late Dame Lois Browne-Evans' book and go down memory lane. And as this Bill targets failed candidates, Mr. Speaker, and whilst to the time I am referring, I was not a Progressive Labour Party Member or supporter . . . I have many relatives and many close friends who were. But it was, truth be told . . . Mr. Speaker, I know that you can verify what I am going to say. Persons like Mr. Howard Saltus, persons like Ms. Aurelia Burch, persons who would have stood up and represented the Progressive Labour Party in seats that were traditionally UBP, did so at tremendous personal cost. Persons who actually stood up and put their name forward, even just to be vocal, and canvassed on behalf, did so at great personal sacrifice, Mr. Speaker.

So, I think when we bring Bills like this and when we make references to candidates, we have to be sensitive in this country that a lot of what we think has been erased still is very prevalent in the mind-set of this country, in the ethos of this country. And I cannot support that.

I understand Oppositions are there trying to tickle up the Government, but sometimes you have to be mindful and respectful.

And let me say this, in that it cheapens the fact that we all have had the experience of trying to get quality candidates to come forward and represent. You know, in this last election, love him or hate him, the late Sir John Swan was able to excite a number of Independents to come forward.

An Hon. Member: Ooh.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And in the name of democracy, as one who at 25 years old came forward and stood at the polls to serve this country in 1983, that takes a lot of courage to do so. So, I salute anyone,

anyone who decides to run for any party or as an Independent. And I take great offence to a Bill that would target someone in that space. I really would.

I mean, it is not to say that an Independent might not, after a few months or so, decide, *I think I will support one party or another*. But to target them in such a way, I think is irresponsible, if only in the name of trying to score some political points. And that is how this has come across to me.

And you know what concerns me is week after week, I hear persons—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —imputing—

The Speaker: Point—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: That just—

The Speaker: Wait—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes.

The Speaker: Member, just—what is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, the Honourable Member was imputing improper motive for bringing the Bill.

The Speaker: Um . . .

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: The Member is indicating you are bringing improper motives for what you indicated for why the Bill was brought.

I am trying to . . .

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I can . . . I can say I was certainly not trying to impute improper motive in my, in my dissertation. What I was trying to say, express, is that I feel that the Opposition may be inadvertently imputing improper motives on persons who are offering themselves for candidacy.

And that's what I find bothersome. Particularly . . . particularly the . . . as I mentioned, the historical construct of this country. And it's real.

And let me say this. Run for conservative UBP or OBA and see how easy it would be to get a job in the private sector.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh! Talk about it!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is the truth, Ruth!

Hon. E. David Burt: Talk about it!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Right?
And conversely—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —offer yourself. Go work for Lombardi or somebody like that and then decide you are going to be a PLP candidate and find out how hard it is to get a job in the private sector in this country.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And I am looking at a Member right in front of me—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —a friend of mine who experienced that same thing in modern day.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: A man who worked in international business. But you know what? When he wasn't a Minister in 2012, or so, was out there in another field, in social work, driving a truck. That's the type of Bermuda we still live in today. And when you come with Bills like that and inadvertently, or deliberately, impugn the integrity of persons willing to offer themselves for high office—an office that you should be proud to hold—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —and should be proud that everyone in this country would want to hold the same office, then you raise the bar of where we sit and stand.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm. Talk about it.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I spent my whole life, from 14 years old at The Berkeley looking at every Member of this House that ever served that was a relative of mine. And they represented every party in this country at that time. From the Ratterays right down to the Hodgsons, to the Halls, to the Borrows. Proud of them.

Stanley Morton, my good cousin, stopped me there and said, *Keep writing those letters to the editor. Don't worry, they're gonna treat you a little bit differently now that you're prepared to speak out, even though you're UBP.* That's true!

And let me tell you this, Mr. Speaker, that's the truth. So, when the [Opposition] feels that, *Hey I can tickle up the Government—*

An Hon. Member: Tickle them up.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —be mindful of the history of this country.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Be mindful of the sensitivity, and be mindful that you can come to Bermuda from overseas and retire and enjoy a wonderful life, and you can give your life's service in this country and not enjoy the same Bermuda that others, who come from overseas, do. Why? Because we are still living in an unequal country. And until every Member of this House appreciates the real truth of this country, we are going to continue to be marred by that. Marred by the sadness of what Mr. Howard Saltus, my good friend who ran in 1968, who still comes to CC because he cares.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Right? Still the legacy of all those persons, Wales's in the East End, who would have stood, Louis Ming's and all those persons who would have stood.

And I will never forget this, my good friend, the late Jimmy Williams. For a long time, persons didn't know Jimmy was UBP or PLP. He was very middle of the road. And he didn't serve long before he passed away. May he rest in peace.

But he used to tell me, *Kim, it's a little bit different when you make that choice and decide to run PLP, you know.* Right? And we used to meet very regularly down in St. George's over lunch to talk about . . . because my mentor Mr. Terry Brennan said, *you need to know certain people and get to know them and they will share with you what's important about business and what's important about the community.*

And so, I am imploring the Opposition, come with your Motions, come with your Bills, come with your attacks, but be mindful that within this country, the construct, that many in their circles of friends would pretend doesn't exist, I am here to say, and I have been saying it since I was 25 years old, what Martin Luther King, [Jr.] fought for, we still must fight for in this country today, because much has not gone away.

It is like Bermuda grass, it sits dormant under 68 degrees and when the climate gets a certain warmth, it shines and shows its ugly head.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Would any other Member . . . MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I planned to speak to this one.

An Hon. Member: Oh, yes.

Another Hon. Member: Nice.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I sometimes get to travel to places and talk to people, and they ask about the politics in Bermuda, inevitably. And I tell them certain things. And then I tell them the history of the politics in Bermuda. And they are somewhat flabbergasted when I tell them about the rampant discrimination that this Island has gone through, how one party controlled the country, basically up until 1998. All right?

And I tell them how when my mama tried to get a job, she couldn't get it because she was Black. My daddy couldn't get a job because he was Black. And they are like, *No, that shouldn't happen*. They are almost like flabbergasted, you know, shocked.

And then I actually show them newspaper clippings of things from the 1960s and 1970s, and so on, so it is no longer my opinion, it's the facts.

An Hon. Member: The facts.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And they say, *Well, I guess those days are over now*.

I say, *Let me explain something. In Bermuda, the reality is that we are a divided country. The Blacks, for lack of a better term, control the politics and the non-Blacks control the economy*.

[They say,] *So how does that work in the long run?*

An Hon. Member: Not good.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I say, *Well, it makes many Blacks not want to even think about politics*, because if they have gone away and got their career, whatever, (right?), Master's degree, they are like, *I am not getting involved in politics*.

And both sides have seen, but especially our side, that many Black professionals don't want to get involved in politics. Not because politics is inevitably bad, but it's going to be bad for their career—like terrible.

Mr. Speaker, when I first ran in 2016, 2017, people were like saying to me, *Hey, you sure you know about this, bye? Because you could lose your job at BELCO*.

I was prepared to lose my job at BELCO. I would have been all right. But many others would not have been. Why? Because there is a mind-set that if you run for the PLP, against the establishment, that's going to affect your professional career, your income levels, so on and so forth.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I didn't get, . . . I got no promotion, mate. I got a demotion . . . got stifled.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes you have to look at the individual and you have to look at the intent. And I want to say that the individual that brought this Bill, I have a lot of respect for—

An Hon. Member: Hey, there you go.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —for that individual.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

An Hon. Member: Very specific.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I look at the intent.

I say, *Well, is he intentionally trying to bring a discriminatory Bill?* I don't know. I don't think so. I will wait for him to point of order if he wants to.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Then I look at the institution which the Bill is coming from, and I am saying, *Well, maybe it's not his intent*. But it's definitely that institutional mind-set that these things are going to come along and cause discriminatory practices.

So, Mr. Speaker, I sit here and I don't know. There's not much I could add to Honourable Diallo Rabain, the Premier, or Kim Swan. But what I can say is [that] if this is a publicity stunt, in which they are going to say tomorrow, *the OBA tried to bring a Bill that brought . . . to bring transparency and the PLP voted against it*, I know the script is already written.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The script is already written.

An Hon. Member: They are going for it.

Another Hon. Member: *The PLP voted against it*.

Mr. Christopher Famous: They are the . . . some media, I won't call any names, is already waiting to hit that "send" button right now.

An Hon. Member: They are going for it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Because this . . . they knew . . . they knew that this Bill would never pass—

An Hon. Member: When they tabled it.

Mr. Christopher Famous: When they tabled it. So, the intent . . . is it discrimination or is it headlines? I am suspecting they are looking for headlines, because they know we would not vote for discrimination.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I say, Mr. Speaker, I join in the chorus line that says, *My voice will say "no" to this Bill*. Because I don't want my children or my grandchildren ever to think, *Daddy* (Grandpa, Papa, whatever), *I would have ran for PLP, but all that money you spent sending me to school might go to waste. Because I can't get a job in town if I put my name next to the PLP.*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other Members who wish to make a contribution?

MP Robinson.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening . . . good night!

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, good night . . . or, good morning.

Several Hon. Members: Good morning.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Good morning. Yes.

The Speaker: Almost morning again.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, I will be brief. I know we have been here for a while, and what I would like to say is . . . given my entrance into politics at 23 years old, I actually started out as a cashier. Right? And the reason why I am bringing this forward is because this . . . this—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I did, I did, yes, I did, I actually . . . I actually lost it right over there, yes.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, this is what I am saying.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I said . . . well, let me . . . let me be clear—

Several Hon. Members: Whoa!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Let me be clear, let me be clear. I was . . . I was, yes, I was appointed to the Senate. And then I was unappointed. And I did it for . . . did

politics for free for three years. And so it . . . that is how it happens.

What I wanted to get up and say is that I think that it used to be—

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It used to be a place where, obviously, it was skewed. But I want to speak to a wider issue that I think a lot of people are facing on both sides of the aisle. The fact that, you know, employment in the country is hard when you are a politician.

I could tell you—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Or an ex-politician.

I mean, when you have an affinity, or you declare yourself as an affiliate of either side, it can be hard for you to be looked at as impartial in certain roles.

I mean, I went and retooled myself, it took me six years to make a leap to another career. And that was mainly because folks felt as though I couldn't commit as much to a job because of the responsibilities that I held in this House, and to my constituents.

And so, I am not dismissing what my colleagues on the other side are saying about being discriminated against for being PLP candidates. But I will say that in this modern era it is kind of universal. I mean, you talk to FDM [Free Democratic Movement], you talk to Independents, you talk to anyone who ran in the last election, and all of them have felt repercussions for declaring their interest for a political—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, my point to this Bill is this. Right? There are avenues in which those folks can enter politics without a direct political advisor role. I mean, you take into account the fact that a few folks have lost on the Progressive Labour Party side at one point to Senators and [were] made Ministers. That's how the system works, right? And that is not something that we are looking to stifle. That's not something that we are looking to cut off.

And the reason why I will say that I support this Bill is because, at the end of the day, there are still many avenues in which a person can get involved in politics. But what I do want to say is that we can acknowledge that we should definitely look at protecting and strengthening being a politician in this country when it comes to employment.

And I think that is another conversation to have, because I can tell you right now, as somebody who's in my 30s, not a lot of my colleagues or friends or people in my age bracket are looking to get involved in politics because they know it will threaten their employment. And that is from all stripes.

You know, I grew up in a PLP family. So, I have cousins and, you know, and uncles—

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —and uncles on that side of the aisle. And I know, I know that there is definitely a stigma from that side of it.

But also, being an OBA member and experiencing the fact that I was kind of stuck in a position where I couldn't move around, or couldn't gain additional employment despite bettering myself, I have seen both sides of the fence. So, I wouldn't diminish that.

But what we have to take into account is public opinion. And all of us hear it on the doorstep, *Oh, you politicians are lining your pockets. You guys, . . . you know, you hear it. And it doesn't just . . . you don't get it from just PLP doors or OBA doors. You get it universally. Folks assume . . . I remember I was reading a comment about myself and how I went to private school and had been born with a silver spoon. Meanwhile, I never touched a private school. You know, Somerset Primary, Sandys and CedarBridge Academy. But these are the preconceived notions of—*

An Hon. Member: [INAUDIBLE] silver spoon was from that fellow sitting in front of you.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Which one?

An Hon. Member: Yes, which one?

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Because—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I will answer that, yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Stay focused.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: But I am not going to engage that—

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —because he knows better than that. The Member knows better than that.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The Member knows better than that.

But the point that I am making is that this particular avenue being closed to folks who recently ran

will show the community that it is through merit that they are appointed. And if somebody wants to—

Hon. E. David Burt: Merit how?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Well, I am just—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, if we are going to . . . if we are going to sit in this Chamber and pretend that the public opinion is not at an all-time low when it comes to the political class in this country, then I can tell you that either somebody is delusional—

An Hon. Member: Oh!

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: —or they are just simply refusing to accept what they are hearing, because it does not take much door-knocking to hear it.

And it is not a personal thing. It is not somebody saying, *Oh, I can't stand this particular Honourable Member.* It's politicians—and it's a global trend. And I know that sometimes some folks obviously have trouble with the global trend, but it is a global trend.

You see people getting elected overseas because they are [quote/unquote] "political outsiders." That is how people are running because people are looking at politicians as the establishment. Period. It doesn't matter what stripe you are.

And if we can't unite in this House around reality, then we have a problem, because that is reality.

How many times has a Minister stood up here and said, *It's a thankless job.* You know, *I get the calls and nobody . . .* that's what you hear in this House. Nobody stands up and says, *Hey, stop. Stop moping.*

That is the reality. It is a thankless job.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: I am quite fulfilled.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Oh, well, I am glad you are fulfilled. But there are a lot of colleagues who have stood up here and said opposite.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: And I am not saying that it is not appreciated. But at the end of the day, every politician is held to that standard, whether . . . like, people are not looking as much [at] separation when it comes to party, when it comes to being a member of politics. That is just how folks are looking.

And as we have seen in the trends with the majority vote, people are voting person, more so now. And so, these are the trends that are happening. And that is not . . . that is not because people are not qualified. I never would . . . I never would stand up in this House

and accuse any one of my colleagues of being unqualified to hold their position.

But the point that we are making is that we are looking to improve public opinion for all of us. We are looking to listen to the way folks are responding to us on the doorstep and show them that, hey, yes, you can be appointed as a Senator. Yes, you can be under our system unelected, be appointed, become a Minister.

But in this situation where somebody is serving at the private pleasure of a person who is their party Leader or Premier or whatnot, it also applies to the Opposition, and the Opposition Leader. And I think that that is something that can't get lost here.

And so, I respect, I understand from the other side where they are coming from. And I will never look to diminish the . . . the . . . experiences of any of my colleagues in this House.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, with that, I think we should try to come together on the fact that, yes, we want to encourage people to join the political system and get involved. But we also want to make sure the public doesn't question us and our reasons for getting involved when they see certain appointments. And we know which ones people have picked up on. And I am not going to go into anybody or anything personal.

It has happened on both sides, which is why it is good that this applies to both sides, because at the end of the day we cannot discriminate against any Member of this House. When we come in here, we are all representatives of our constituencies. It is not . . . I don't refer to someone as the PLP MP for [constituency] 29. You know, when the Speaker calls the name, he says representative for [constituency] 29. You know, that is how I think we should approach this Bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member . . . Minister Adams.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member who just took his seat. But I can also say that in politics, at every door that I knock on there is a different person with a different concern, with a different perspective, a different view. And the point I am saying is that, earlier, the Member was referring to us not being able to grasp reality on how . . . what people are saying.

But Mr. Speaker, I could also say on countless times I walk the streets, and there are people who tell me and my colleagues, *Great job, you all. And thank you.*

So, this narrative of doom and gloom, like everyone is unhappy, and everyone is miserable, and everyone is struggling, that is not the case. And we cannot accept this narrative that is continuously being pushed.

But I will then get specific to this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, at first glance, this Bill appears straightforward. I believe with this Bill, the Opposition is ultimately (as they say) looking to increase public confidence. A word that they have said countless times is "trust."

[Laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: And one of the ways they propose to do so with this Bill is by preventing individuals who lose an election from being appointed to these positions for two years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it goes without saying . . . it goes without saying that public confidence and integrity and transparency are all important. And I genuinely believe that every Member of this Honourable House is in agreement with that. However, Mr. Speaker, good intentions alone do not make for good pieces of legislation. You see, the question I asked myself, and the question that I believe we should all ask ourselves as legislators is whether this Bill actually improves governance.

Now, I have reviewed the Bill several times, and I do not believe it does. And, therefore, like my colleagues have said, I cannot support this Bill.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my first issue, similar to what the Premier had mentioned earlier, is the fact that it creates a new legal restriction on someone based solely on the fact that they have put their name forward during an election.

My second issue is that it responds—

An Hon. Member: Lost.

Hon. Jache Adams: Lost an election.

And my second issue is that it responds to perception. And this is the key one. It responds to perception rather than demonstrated misconduct.

And my final issue with this, and this is my opinion, is that it actually does not solve the very problem it claims to address. And I will get into this.

So now, first, when Parliament creates a new legal restriction, we should ask ourselves, *What conduct justifies that disqualification or restriction?* In other words, what has the person done that warrants Parliament taking away an opportunity that would otherwise be available to them?

Notice, this Bill is not looking to place restrictions on a person because of any form of misconduct [or] conflict of interest. It isn't even proposing to place restrictions on a person because of incompetence. What the One Bermuda Alliance is proposing with this Bill is to place restrictions on a Bermudian who simply exercised their democratic right to stand for an election and subsequently was unsuccessful.

Mr. Speaker, we really need to sit on that for a second and grasp how egregious that is. Every election we champion democracy and encourage people to put themselves forward. We tell them that democracy

depends upon citizens being willing to step up. And now the OBA is proposing, with this Bill, to begin the slippery slope (and these are my words, “the slippery slope”) of placing restrictions on individuals who do. It tells them that if they answer the call and therefore are unsuccessful, Parliament will impose a legal restriction that would never have applied had they simply stayed home. This is what we are talking about today, Mr. Speaker, with this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, I firmly do not believe that this is the message that Parliament should be sending.

But what I find even more difficult to understand is the inconsistency at the heart of this Bill. Mr. Speaker, the emphasis under this Bill is on an unsuccessful candidate but has nothing to say about a successful one. So, what we have here is either another poorly thought-out Bill by the One Bermuda Alliance, or they are actually saying that they have no issue if a successful candidate was hired under this Bill. But if you are unsuccessful, you must wait two years.

An Hon. Member: Well, move your amendments then. Move your amendments.

Hon. Jache Adams: Come on.

In fact, I am very surprised, and I will say this, I am very surprised that MP Pearman . . . because I find him to be a stickler for details.

And so again, for us to be here debating this Bill leads me to believe that it is deliberate.

Hon. E. David Burt: Everything about political motive.

Hon. Jache Adams: This is deliberate.

Hon. E. David Burt: Political motive—

Hon. Jache Adams: So, I ask a very simple question.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let's go.

Hon. Jache Adams: What is it about losing an election that suddenly makes someone unsuitable? Does losing an election make a lawyer less qualified? Does losing an election make an engineer less capable? Does losing an election make an economist less knowledgeable?

An Hon. Member: No!

Hon. Jache Adams: Of course not.

And I will remind the Opposition that many of them at this very moment have been unsuccessful candidates at some point.

An Hon. Member: It could be a cushy job.

Hon. Jache Adams: That is why—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Jache Adams: —that is why the very thought . . . that is why the very thought of placing restrictions on a person, purely based on the fact of them being unsuccessful at the polls, cannot stand.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: I don't know . . . colleagues earlier have mentioned this.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Colleagues earlier have mentioned this. And I don't know how true this is. It has not happened to me. But I have certainly heard the stories, Mr. Speaker, of how persons claim, and again I say claim because I wasn't there, I don't know, but they claim that they were threatened by members of the former UBP, that they would lose their jobs or their mortgage if they don't vote for them.

And it is alarming, and this is what I will say,—

An Hon. Member: Twenty years ago?

Hon. Jache Adams: —it is alarming that decades later the OBA is here bringing this Bill and I will leave it at that.

An Hon. Member: Thirty years ago?

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, my second concern is that this legislation is built upon perception rather than demonstrated and substantiated misconduct.

Now let me say this, because the MP DeCouto says *perception*. Well, in the explanatory notes, in the explanatory statement, it tells us that the Bill seeks to address the perception that unsuccessful candidates may be rewarded through appointments.

An Hon. Member: Perception.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, now perception has its place, can't deny it. But Parliament should be very cautious about creating legal restrictions based upon perception alone. Notice, I have yet to hear of a single example of an appointee in their duties engaged in any misconduct.

However, the One Bermuda Alliance believes there should be legal restrictions on individuals, not because they actually did anything wrong, but just because it is perceived that they could.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: It is about perception. Read the Bill, perception is what this addresses.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, legislation should be built upon evidence—read the Bill—not simply on perception.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, when I break it down, I do not believe this Bill actually solves the problem it is trying and claiming to solve. It appears the Opposition is saying that unsuccessful candidates should not be rewarded with government positions. Yet even if this Bill were to pass, unsuccessful candidates will still be allowed to be appointed elsewhere in government.

So, let us ask the obvious question. If an unsuccessful candidate can still be appointed to the Senate, if an unsuccessful candidate can still be appointed to a government board, if an unsuccessful candidate can still contribute their expertise to government, then what exactly is this Bill looking to achieve?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Aah! Good question.
He will take a point of order.

Hon. Jache Adams: See, Mr. Speaker, good legislation actually solves problems. It should improve governance. It should produce better outcomes. And this Bill simply does not.

And so, for those reasons, Mr. Speaker, I just cannot support it. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Honourable Minister.

Minister De Silva, would you like to add your comments?

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

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I am going to try to be a little short.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: You are short!

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You remember once upon a time, I had to stand on a box when Stanley Lowe was our Speaker. We used to have that joke every Friday.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised at this particular Bill is being presented in this House by this particular MP.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I was quite surprised that this particular MP brought this Bill, because I would have expected it to have been brought by—

An Hon. Member: Someone else.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —someone else. Not this particular individual. It just doesn't seem right to me, because this Bill has nothing but a large wedge attached to it. And when I say that, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about trying to wedge the relationship of our community.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And we get a laugh from Honourable Member DeCouto.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, it's funny that he should laugh, because that Honourable Member, Mr. Speaker, talked about this Bill stopping friends and family relationships, talked about this Bill—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Deputy [Premier] is, I know, unintentionally misleading the House. I said that many people look at this and say it looks like friends and family, which is a different thing.

The Speaker: Okay, you made reference to it; he is making reference to the same statement.

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

He also made reference several times to these *little cushy jobs*.

An Hon. Member: Yes. I heard him.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it is high time . . . that Honourable Member has been in this House now for a while. And every week he has to be pulled up because of the things he infers. And tonight was no different.

And, Mr. Speaker, let me refer back to the Opposition's Reply to the Budget this year. And on page 37, the Honourable Shadow Minister, and I will quote with your leave, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: “So while the Premier makes numerous visits to the Middle East and Crypto conferences to” (in brackets, inverted commas) “‘make connections’ . . .” What do you think that means? *Make connections*. And quite frankly, it should have been struck from the record because we know . . . I will take a point of order if he wants to explain to me what “make connections” in inverted brackets means. Because I know what it infers. It is just like the *friends and family*.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it's just like the *little cushy jobs*.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's a . . . it's a . . . we are seeing a trend.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The language “make connections,” it's the sort of language that comes directly from the Premier's statements, describing these trips. They are marketing trips. They go to make connections with trade, trade associations. And the reason I put it in quotes is because, frankly, it's only connections and we are not seeing tangible benefits here in Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Member, he tried—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He tried to give an explanation.

The Speaker: He gave an explanation for—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And I guess what?

The Speaker: —his use of it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I appreciate that. But I think most people in this House and most people in the country know exactly what he was meaning by putting that in inverted brackets, Mr. Speaker. Just like he said, *friends and family*, just like he said, *little cushy jobs*. He meant cushy little jobs. He couldn't even say cushy jobs. He had to [be] more demeaning by saying *little* cushy jobs.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In other words, getting paid for doing nothing. That is what he's inferring.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Deputy [Premier] is definitely imputing improper motive because I did not mean to demean. I was relaying.

[General uproar]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am relaying—

The Speaker: Wait, Members. Wait, Members. Come on. Come on.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I am relaying public perception, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, he said that several times tonight, relaying public . . . what did he say?

Several Hon. Members: Perceptions.

The Speaker: Perceptions.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Perceptions.

Well, let's look where he goes in the public.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, yes!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Royal Yacht Club, Fairylands, Tucker's Town.

Hon. E. David Burt: Of course!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's where he goes, Mr. Speaker.

So, when he refers to public perception

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —he ain't going around Devonshire, right?

The Speaker: Point of order.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The speaker, the Deputy [Premier] is not even correct.

Thank you.

The Speaker: You should let him hang out with you, so you can figure out where he goes. How's that?

[Laughter]

The Speaker: How's that?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will tell you what, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Oh, champagne brunch at Tucker's Point.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: If the Honourable Member DeCouto was to hang out with me, he would not hear the things that he hears around Fairylands and around the Yacht Club. I can assure you that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know, we had a bit of history told here tonight, and sometimes it's important for us to talk about history. And when you talk about when people represent the Progressive Labour Party, and I heard my young brother, my young Honourable Member brother over there talking about his experiences being an OBA member. I will tell you what . . . he might have had, and you might have some experiences, bad experiences being an OBA member, but come over this side.

Then you will what experience is like being belonging to a political party in this country. And I say ask people like Andrew Outerbridge, Dr. Barbara Ball.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, myself. History will show what I have had to go through. And I'm not looking for any sympathy, but it is a fact.

And I'm light. And you will know, Mr. Speaker (you have been here longer than all of us), what it is like for anyone who wears green and white, what they have to go through in their life and what their children and family have to go through, too. Let's not forget them.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to give you one example that . . . because I know there are a lot of new Members next door. They might remember a former Member of the OBA by the name of Jeff Baron, former Honourable Member. He resigned one night, Mr. Speaker, and the next week, guess where he went? He was National Security Minister. Guess where he got a job? Now I am not talking about a little cushy job. I am talking about a really nice job at HSBC. Head of what? Security.

You had another former Member. His name was Scott. Wayne Scott. Resigned as a Minister. Where did he go work next?

An Hon. Member: The Gaming Commission.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Gaming Commission. Making twice as much as what a Minister made. But see, all these things are okay.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: When we talk . . . well, it might have been a little bit less than that. I agree.

But, Mr. Speaker, this Bill is trying to penalise people. *Penalise*. That is what it is. It is to penalise and it is to say to any future young men or young women who wish to run in politics for either side. Because you haven't left out yourselves. You might get in another 50 years. So, you guys might experience it.

But what it's doing is attempting to penalise—financial terrorism, some people might call it—penalise people for wanting to represent their country, who might actually care for the people of this country [who] might want to be a part of the process of decisions that are made on behalf of the people in this country. They might genuinely want to do that. So, they are going to be penalised.

And how many times do we say we don't have enough intelligence in people who are running for political office? Well, actually, we do have a lot of intelligent people on both sides who want to run for political office. Why should they be penalised if they're not successful and we want that brain power in the Premier's office or in a Minister's office?

What, you want [is for] us to hire people who we don't know and we don't trust and they don't know our political agenda—

An Hon. Member: Give political advice.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —to give political advice?

So, Mr. Speaker, that is what we . . . that is why we will never support this Bill.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

An Hon. Member: No.

The Speaker: None?

Would the mover of the motion, mover of the Bill—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank every Member who contributed to this debate. Because it's—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, if I may, on behalf of Members, move on a matter of personal privilege and ask your indulgence.

It seems that the air conditioner is not working. Can we remove our jackets?

The Speaker: Yes, please. Go right ahead.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Keep your shirt on, though.

[Laughter]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I thank all of the previous speakers for contributing to this debate.

I think it is a crucial part of our political discourse that we define where our beliefs fall. Because if we are unable to see the differences between each other's political views, especially as it relates to intent, underlying philosophy, belief systems, then we are unable to proceed on matters that are very significant. And on this one, we have a great benchmark—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: —in that it is a narrow Bill.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: It does not attempt to do a great many things, but rather a relatively restricted or limited thing, so as to address a matter of public confidence.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And everyone who spoke this evening spoke to a variety of points, not just about the Bill, but it expanded. One of the most important expansions of this debate, Mr. Speaker, was on the lived experience and the historical scars that are both significant and deep.

Mr. Speaker, it is impossible, I think, in a modern country to deny, to alter, or to explain away the horrors of our past. It is not fitting for this Honourable House to try to diminish or in any other way excuse our past. It is as horrible to me as it is to anybody.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And so, it is crucial that when we speak about Bills, that when it comes up it is acknowledged and put on the table. And I am thankful for everyone putting it on the table.

Mr. Speaker, there has been some commentary and opinions on this Bill, including that it is sinister,

that it is discriminatory, and that since it is known it would not pass, then it clearly has some other intent.

Let me speak to all of these criticisms, Mr. Speaker, because I think they should be addressed.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill was developed and tabled pursuant to the Constitution of our country. It was constrained by all precedent. It was developed in a manner that it could be tabled for the purposes of this debate. It was further limited and shaped by the Standing Orders.

Mr. Speaker, Opposition Bills come that way. Opposition Bills are enshrined, not only in Constitution, but in Standing Orders. And this prescribed a very specific methodology for how to do it. That methodology was adhered to loyally and faithfully. There is no defect in process. There is no weaponisation of intent. This is a clear, constitutionally aligned process, one that I have loved participating in, even though the Opposition typically participates only in the scrutinising of Government legislation. Like I said, the Constitution and Standing Orders provide for the Opposition to legislate. And so, we have legislated, Mr. Speaker.

But we legislate on different terms than the Government, Mr. Speaker. The Government has access to institutional resources far exceeding that of the Opposition. We make do with our annual budget of \$70,000. The Government makes do with its budget of \$1.2 billion.

And as such, Mr. Speaker, it provides them incredible opportunities as it relates to the legislative process. Opportunities that I think, Mr. Speaker, would be better applied if they were to attend to an Opposition Bill and address all of those full resources into the Committee. Because, Mr. Speaker, our Constitution and the Standing Orders of this House outline that the Committee is where we exchange ideas. This part, Mr. Speaker, is about principles. Are the principles correct? And if the principles are sound, we move them into the Committee. But there we workshop. There we exchange ideas. There we include. There we amend, Mr. Speaker.

You see, Mr. Speaker, one of the deficits, I think, of our current parliamentary processes is that when Bills arrive in the House there seems to be this presumption that they will float straight through. Not that they will face the rough toing and froing of a modern Westminster parliamentary democracy. Not that they won't be assigned in Committee, that Whips won't have to meet to decide who's doing what when something is happening, what actual documents are being circulated, Mr. Speaker.

It is one of our deficiencies. It is one that I always regret, but it is one that I think the public should know that our Committee process, as enshrined in the Constitution, is a rich environment for problem-solving in Bermuda.

And this is one of the areas, Mr. Speaker, where we could always problem solve. You see, Mr. Speaker, everything we can do better. Mr. Speaker, we

are capable of coming up into this House and resolving the most difficult issues of our country, not in a manner that degrades one another, but in a manner that aligns with the ultimate goals for our country.

Mr. Speaker, public confidence is worthwhile to listen to. You see, Mr. Speaker, I think one of our biggest problems with politics globally is that we seem to think, or the public seems to think, that it is built like marble or granite, that it is strong, that it can just withstand time, that it doesn't require participation. And the fact is that our democratic systems are incredibly fragile. They are incredibly fragile, Mr. Speaker. And that is why public confidence is so, so key.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Public confidence means that people who trust us can trust us to make a hard decision, Mr. Speaker. This decision isn't particularly hard, but one day there will be hard decisions brought, and there was an attempt.

But, Mr. Speaker, the nature of the Opposition Bill is to preserve and enhance the trust, the trust the public have in this Honourable House, the trust they have in us as Members.

Mr. Speaker, it is key that we work together on the things that we can work together on. And though they are rare, they seemingly are rare, we should nonetheless aspire and find them.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot condemn a Member who stands up and gives a reasoned argument to say I can't vote for something. That is their right. That is their privilege. And I concur with every single . . . and I would defend their right to do so. I would not think them mean, I would not think them of ill intent. But, Mr. Speaker, I do think that to start a contribution with *I am not going to vote no matter what for this*, is a strange starting position in a place where we are sent to work together to accomplish the one outcome that Bermuda desires.

Mr. Speaker, the Government has made clear that it is not open to consider the Bill. It is not open to making amendments. It is not open for us to rise and report [progress] for further consideration. It has said that the entire process will not be allowed to proceed. And that is their right, Mr. Speaker, they have the votes for it.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think that the difference between this Bill, its intent, and the Government's position on it helps to explain the situation Bermuda finds herself in.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the Premier made a point. He said: *What is the problem he is trying to solve?* And then he proceeded to say, it is not the solution for the problem that he couldn't figure out. Which was curious.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I would point out that the Premier's lack of awareness of the problem is why this problem exists.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I invite the Government to vote to confirm the suspicions which generated this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, we stand every night here doing the people's work. And at the conclusion of this, the Opposition will have its say, and the Government will have its way. But one thing I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, is this attitude I heard the other day, which was repeated in this House, *Why are you tabling legislation? You knew it wouldn't pass.*

An Hon. Member: Uh-huh.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, the roles and privileges of the Opposition are enshrined in law. And we will do our job pursuant to our mandate and the laws of this country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: I haven't put the motion yet.

The Member has now called for the Bill to be committed.

Are we all in favour of being committed?

Several Hon. Members: No.

Other Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: It sounds like the noes outweighed the ayes.

Would anyone want to take a name call? I don't think so. I don't think so.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Anyone wants a name call?

Some Hon. Members: Names.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, Lord. They stood up.

The Speaker: Three members have stood up, which means we will now have to go to names.

Hon. E. David Burt: Ring a bell.

The Speaker: Sarge, [do] you want to make sure everyone's in? We have got . . . what have we got, two minutes before they all can get in?

Let me set you—

An Hon. Member: Five.

The Speaker: Five minutes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: You want to wait five minutes? All right.

The Deputy Clerk: It is two minutes.

The Speaker: The Clock's on.

The Deputy Clerk: It's two minutes.

The Speaker: It is two minutes. It is two minutes . . . it is two minutes. Five is too long. Two minutes. Two minutes.

Any Member in the sound of this, who is in the building, wants to come down into the Chamber. You got two minutes to . . . well, a minute . . . a minute and a half to be here.

An Hon. Member: A minute and a half.

[Pause for the ringing of the bell]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The clock is ticking.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: For the listening audience, a division has been called, which means we have to get Members who weren't in the Chamber in if they wish to participate in this vote. And there is a two-minute time period before we can call the names for the vote.

And we are just now waiting for those two minutes to expire. There are about 16 seconds left, and then we will start the name call for the vote. That's for the listening audience who are still up at 12:30 am listening.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Remind the time.

The Speaker: I just want to keep them informed.

Hon. E. David Burt: It's 12:30.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Members, the two-minute time has expired. No more Members can enter.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no! Too bad.

The Speaker: Members cannot enter, and we will now take the name call.

Mrs. Beale, would you like to start the roll call?
The Deputy Clerk. Mrs. Beale will now do the roll call.

The Deputy Clerk: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 be committed.

If you are in agreement with the Bill being committed, say Aye. If you are against, say Nay.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

DIVISION

[Motion that the Bill entitled Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 be committed]

Ayes: 9

Hon. L. C. Cannonier
Dr. D. DeCouto
Mr. R. King
Mr. S. Pearman
Mr. J. Richardson
Mr. D. Robinson
Hon. B. Smith
Ms. L. Smith
Ms. R. Tucker

Nays: 16

Hon. J. Adams
Hon. E. D. Burt
Hon. O. Darrell
Hon. Z. J. S. De Silva
Hon. Rev. Dr. E. A. Dill
Mr. C. Famous
Ms. L. F. Foggo
Hon. T. Furbert
Hon. J. Hayward
Hon. A. Lightbourne
Mr. D. Lister III
Mrs. R. Ming
Hon. D. V. S. Rabain
Mr. H. E. Swan
Mr. M. A. Weeks
Hon. K. N. Wilson

Absent: 10

Pastor L. Bean
Mr. V. Campbell
Mr. C. L. Dickinson
Hon. M. Fahy
Hon. W. L. Furbert
Mr. W. L. Scott
Mr. J. S. Simmons
Mr. S. Simmons
Mr. N. S. Tyrrell
Mr. P. Wilmot

The Deputy Clerk: With a vote of 9 Ayes to 16 Nays, the motion is defeated.

[Motion defeated by majority on division: The Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 was not committed.]

The Speaker: Thank you, Members, for your participation.

The next item on the Order Paper . . . is that being done or carried over? The second reading for the

Road Traffic and Motor Car (Road Safety and Penalties) Act [2026]. Is that being carried?

An Hon. Member: Carried.

The Speaker: Okay, it is being carried.

Okay, that brings us to the end of the business for today. We are going to do the third readings, and then I will make an announcement.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

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

BILL

THIRD READING

CORPORATE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 be read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: The second item—

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

The Speaker: The Human Rights . . . Oh?

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I do mine?

The Speaker: Oh, you would like to do yours, while on your feet. Do [Order] No. 3 and [Order] No. 5.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just [Order No.] 3.

The Speaker: No, just . . . [Order No.] 5 is Supplementary. Do [Order] No. 3.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Corporate . . . sorry, the Tax Credits Amendment Act [2026] be now read a third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None. Proceed.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

TAX CREDITS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

I move that the said Bill be read a third time by its title only and passed.

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

[Motion carried: The Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Would the Minister of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors like to do [Order] No. 2?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

HUMAN RIGHTS AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: The Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed. Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Human Rights Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Minister of Health, you can do both of yours.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by its title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order [21] be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled . . .

The Speaker: The Bermuda Health Council—

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: —the Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
None.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

BERMUDA HEALTH COUNCIL (MISCELLANEOUS AMENDMENTS) ACT 2026

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended . . . oh dear . . . and that the Bill be read now, it's third time . . . sorry, read for the third time [by] its title only.

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

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: [Order] No. 6, the Minister of Home Affairs.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026.

The Speaker: Any objections?

Several Hon. Members: Yes!

An Hon. Member: Objections.

The Speaker: Objections to it being read the third time by title only, and so it doesn't sound like there are any names being called, and I don't know if the objections were outweighed by those in favour.

Those in favour?

Many Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Those objecting?

Several Hon. Members: No.

The Speaker: The ayes have it.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Minister.

BILL

THIRD READING

COST OF LIVING COMMISSION AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

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

I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Members, the Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

[Motion carried: The Cost of Living Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: [Order] No. 7, Junior Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Any objections?
None. Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY REFORM ACT 2026

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

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

[Motion carried: The Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: That takes care of all the third readings for tonight.

Before I call on the Premier to take us to the motion to adjourn, I will read a ruling in reference to a matter that rose last week.

SPEAKER'S RULING

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO HISTORIC LAND LOSSES IN BERMUDA AND THE SUB JUDICE STATUS OF CERTAIN MATTERS BEFORE THE COURTS IN BERMUDA

The Speaker: The subject is the ruling regarding the debate on the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Historical Land Losses in Bermuda and the sub judice status of certain matters now before the courts in Bermuda.

Honourable Members, a question has been raised regarding whether this House is procedurally barred from debating the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Historical Land Losses in Bermuda due to the sub judice rule, specifically Standing Order 19(11)(b), in light of the ongoing litigations in the Supreme Court. I have reviewed the status of the matters brought to the Court's attention regarding Civil Jurisdiction 2024: No. 285, the plaintiffs have filed an appeal against the Supreme Court's decision to strike out their writ.

While this matter is once again before the courts, I maintain my ruling that this House is not procedurally barred from debating the Commission of Inquiry Report. The subject of this House debate, which is the policy findings and recommendations contained in the Report, is distinct from the specific legal merits of the appeal.

The Judiciary will resolve the civil dispute. This House will address the public interest issues raised by the Commission.

Regarding Civil Jurisdiction 2025: No. 114, I note that the plaintiffs have included a request in their originating summons for the Court to ask this House to pause any debate on the Commission of Inquiry Report.

The Speaker must be guided by the following principles.

1. The sub judice threshold. Standing Order 19(11)(b) prohibits debate that might, in the opinion of the Speaker, prejudice the interest of parties to a legal proceeding. This Rule is intended to protect the administration of justice, ensuring that a jury or a judge is not unduly influenced by public debate on the factual findings of a specific ongoing trial.
2. The nature of litigation. Case No: 114 is a constitutional challenge concerning the process and statutory framework of the Commission of Inquiry in reference to whether the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1935 portends an inadequate right of appeal under article 6(8) of the Constitution. This is a question of law and statutory structure. A political debate regarding the findings of the Commission's Report is distinct from and unlikely to [prejudice] the judge's legal interpretation of the Bermuda Constitution.
3. Separation of powers. The mere filing of a summons in the Supreme Court which requests that this House stay its hand does not constitute a binding judicial injunction. This House is the supreme legislative body, and its constitutional duty to deliberate on matters of significant public interest cannot be automatically

suspended by the filing of a private litigation. To rule otherwise would be to surrender the House's legislative autonomy to any litigant who chooses to file such a motion.

Accordingly, I rule that this House is not procedurally barred from debating the Report.

However, in the interest of maintaining the highest standards of our proceedings and respecting the ongoing judicial review, I provide the following guidance to all Members.

1. Avoid sub judice issues: Members should exercise caution and avoid commenting on any specific merits of the constitutional questions currently before the Court, namely, the legal validity of the Commission's refusal to hear Case No. 51 or to the specific interpretation of article 6(8) of the Constitution.
2. Focus on policy: Our debate should remain focused on the policy implications of the Report, the broader issues of the historical land loss and the Commission's finding as a matter of public record.
3. The restriction on questions: Members are further reminded of Standing Order 17(5)(g)(iv) which explicitly prohibits the asking of any questions that reflect on the decisions of a court of law or likely to prejudice a matter under trial.

This serves as a vital procedural companion to the restriction on debate, ensuring that neither formal inquiries nor oral deliberations inadvertently interfere with the judicial proceedings.

This House may proceed with the motion.

That's my ruling, and the matter can be taken up at any time in the future.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Would you like to do it now, Members? We have still got hours on the clock.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: With that, I am going to call on the Premier to move the motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

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

With communication having been shared with the Opposition Leader, yourself and others, Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, September 4.

And noting that, Mr. Speaker, I wish to speak to the motion to adjourn, if there are no other Members that wish to speak.

The Speaker: Any other Member wish . . . no, the Premier is on his feet—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I will be extremely, what they call that, vertically challenged right now.

An Hon. Member: Short.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, that's the word, short.

[Laughter]

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, I couldn't make it earlier, wasn't feeling well, so I missed the condolences. I want to give condolences to some families in Devonshire, if possible.

Mrs. Francis—

The Speaker: On the motion to adjourn, you can—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, well, I don't want to be sub judice, right?

The Speaker: I'll tell you what, you can do it under the three-minute requirement of condolences in the morning, and not the 20 minutes of the motion to adjourn.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good one, good one—

The Speaker: I can set the clock for three minutes if you'd like.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Frances Baker of Green Acres in Devonshire, she passed a couple weeks ago. Mrs. Baker was a stalwart of Devonshire, Christ Church Devonshire, Wolves Sports Club, whatever to do with Devonshire, she was it. She was one of those big mamas.

An Hon. Member: Ariel Sands.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Ariel Sands, as well.

Additionally, her next-door neighbour, Mrs. Joan Pike-Daniels, passed away. Also, a big mama of Green Acres. So, I want to—

Mr. Robert King: Associate.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —speak to the family—Associate MP King.

I want to speak to their families to say how much I love them, how much the family is loved. Because they are going through changes now that they haven't . . . obviously they have to adjust to.

Also, Mr. "Honky" Simons, I don't mean that in a discriminatory way. Before anyone says anything, right? He was also from Devonshire, a Loyal Hill Incubator, as they say, Inky.

An Hon. Member: Mr. Incubator.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Incubator, passed suddenly. Not of Devonshire, I guess you would say a young stalwart of Devonshire.

CUP MATCH, TRUE MEANING OF

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, as I close down, I just want to say the true meaning of Cup Match is never about who wins Cup Match. It is about the fact that our people fought for their emancipation. And lodges from both ends of the Island started a function to celebrate that. So, I want all of our Members, no matter which side you are on, or the confused people who say that they are neutral—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: I don't know, I didn't hear it, but there are some out there. To understand—

The Speaker: There's no neutrality in Bermuda.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I have tried to explain that, but some people say that their mama is St. George's, their daddy is Somerset, so they want to make sure that they don't get disinherited, so they just walk down the middle.

The Speaker: No. Don't work.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, my point is this, is that we celebrate Emancipation one day, Mary Prince the other day. It was in your very House eight years ago that we started the process to decolonise Emancipation Weekend. So, I want to thank those who support it, thank those who realise that we must not, can't conflate emancipation with a coloniser.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and happy Sabbath. Have a good weekend, and I will see you up in Somerset when we take the Cup down east.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Well, that won't happen.

Any other Member . . . MP Lister. You want to join in this one too, MP Lister?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, the hour is late, so I will try—

The Speaker: Yes, it is.

CUP MATCH SAFETY

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —not to speak too long.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do just want to follow in the vein of the memory for me. In two weeks, we will not be in this House, and we will be celebrating Cup Match, Mr. Speaker. Whether you are blue and blue or red and blue, as you said, there is no side.

Mr. Speaker, Cup Match showcases the best of Bermuda. Even though we have different teams that we support, we all come together, whether it is at Somerset this year or in the odd year up in St. George's. And we can celebrate, we can have fun, win, lose, or draw. Bermudians, we can still find the good . . . enjoy it, whether it's a win, lose, or draw.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to wish everyone a safe weekend, and as we go into Cup Match, a safe holiday, Mr. Speaker. I know last time we spoke we spoke a lot about our roads. And I just want to again implore and encourage people, as we celebrate over the next two weeks, to be mindful. Do not drink, consume alcohol, or any other substances, and then get on a bike or a car, and try to get to point A to B. We want to keep our roads safe.

Mr. Speaker, my main points I want to speak about tonight, and I know it's late, so I'm going to try and keep it . . . Mr. Speaker. That was the preamble.

[Laughter]

CORPORATE INCOME TAX ACT RIPPLE EFFECTS

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Earlier today, Mr. Speaker, we did have two debates, two Bills presented by the Minister of Finance on the corporate income tax. But I don't want to speak on that, Mr. Speaker. What I want to speak on is the impact of the corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier this year, we had the Budget Debate, and it was quoted today by the Member from the Opposition, where I did [speak to] ripple effects of the corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, just as when you throw a pebble or a stone into the water, those—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes, that was me.

As you throw a stone in the water, those ripples go on until they reach another shore or wherever, Mr. Speaker. Months later, I can still report on a ripple effect of the corporate income tax, Mr. Speaker.

Earlier today in our debates, there was much made in regard to the regulatory framework of

Bermuda, how we have a strong regulatory framework, whether it's the BMA, the RA. In this case, it's the CITA, Mr. Speaker. And I say that because, Mr. Speaker, I want to reference, if possible two articles in *The Royal Gazette*, Mr. Speaker, one more recent than the other.

Back in April, April 23, in [The Royal Gazette](#), Mr. Speaker, there was an article put out titled *Tax regime attracting cruise lines to Bermuda*. And quoting one of the directors of Conyers', Mr. Speaker, which he put, he stated: "The legislative framework," of Bermuda "allows corporations to qualify for an exclusion from corporate tax on international shipping income, provided they can demonstrate that the strategic management and decision-making regarding their vessels take place . . . In addition to the CIT Act, Bermuda is widely recognised as a first-class jurisdiction to do business, known for its stable English common law system, close proximity to the US and Europe and its robust regulatory environment and modern infrastructure."

So, Mr. Speaker, we see how even in the shipping and the cruise industry, our framework is attracting businesses' cruise lines to Bermuda.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do want to refer to another [The Royal Gazette](#) article, more recent, an article from July 8, Mr. Speaker. In regard to the title, *Beyond tax: why big companies are choosing Bermuda*. And I want to quote again, one of the articles of Conyers again.

And it is quoted, Mr. Speaker. Leading public . . . I am sorry, I have to find where I had that, Mr. Speaker. Yes. Mr. Speaker, it talks about how these multinational companies are choosing Bermuda or leaving other jurisdictions to come to Bermuda because of our regulatory framework and the strong framework we have, Mr. Speaker.

And so, again, these are the ripple effects of the CIT, Mr. Speaker, where we are seeing businesses, multinational entities, selecting Bermuda as a jurisdiction to do their business in. And so, again, it goes to show and prove what we have done. The Government, in conjunction with the other regulatory bodies, to show that we have a strong and stable framework in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

And as I said, I don't want to talk too long, the hour is late, Mr. Speaker. But I just wanted to raise that—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —because . . . to show the work that is being done.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

CUP MATCH

Mr. Dennis Lister III: And I want to go further in, and again, the spirit of Cup Match, Mr. Speaker, is that everyone in Bermuda plays a part in the environment here. Whether if you work in the industries—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —whether you are in the hotel industry, whatever industry, Mr. Speaker, we all play our part to help make Bermuda a successful jurisdiction for business to be done here.

So, I just want to say thank you, Mr. Speaker, to those who work in the regulatory industries. People that, us as politicians that set policies and legislation. But also, to the everyday Bermudians who help, as I said, whether you work in hospitality, whatever other industry, we all work to help make this economy work. And a byproduct of that is seeing these multinational companies choose and select Bermuda as a jurisdiction to do business in.

And so, Mr. Speaker, again, as we head into Cup Match, just want everyone to be mindful to be safe, enjoy it, enjoy it responsibly. And I look to see all our Members in this House on September 4, Mr. Speaker, where we can continue doing the work of the people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Lister.

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

Opposition Leader, you have the floor.

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA, OBA RESPONSE

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

Mr. Speaker, although I would like to give my traditional remarks before we go into the Cup Match break, I think it's also important for me to answer to a very, very, very long Statement that was made by the Premier earlier today. Because the Premier thought that he would take the opportunity to give everybody—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The good news.

Hon. Ben Smith: —his version of the last nine years. I guess he felt that it was important that the population could have a view of what he was able to accomplish over that period of time.

Hon. E. David Burt: We do it every year —

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Ben Smith: So, the issue is that the Premier told us that his Government built this fairer Bermuda . . . and that his record speaks for itself.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with him. His record does speak for itself.

But I am not sure his record says what he thinks it says. Because, Mr. Speaker, although you can say certain things, like when he mentioned the scholarships and the signature schools and the spending that

was done on education, we in the Opposition support the scholarships. We support that progress.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now you do.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: But the difference is, Mr. Speaker, you can't stand and make that comment without pointing out the fact what our literacy numbers are, what our numeracy numbers are, and what the actual issues are. Where the teachers are not feeling supported, where the parents are losing confidence in the education system.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: Both of those things are happening at the same time under that leadership over nine years.

Mr. Speaker, he can talk about the progress that he had in health care, while grandmothers are right now in hallways in that hospital. Both parts of that picture need to be painted, not a one-sided one.

And yes, increases in pension year after year after year.

An Hon. Member: Yes, well done.

Hon. Ben Smith: Well done by the Government. That's what the Premier wants us to do on this side, applaud that, and we do.

But Mr. Speaker, the people in the country also are saying that whatever those benefits are, they are not enough for them to pay for the groceries as we talked about earlier today, the BELCO bill, the medical bills, because every year they are falling further behind in this country. And as we have corporate income tax with millions of dollars, and as we see record growth in international business, the local economy is stagnant or falling behind.

And they can argue against it. The problem is that at the same time, we have emigration numbers that have continued to grow. Emigration numbers that are continuing to grow. Because, Mr. Speaker,—

An Hon. Member: Where's the data?

Hon. Ben Smith: *Where's the data?* There it is.

An Hon. Member: Where is it?

Hon. Ben Smith: Because one thing about them, they can get up and give all of these Statements about how wonderful everything is.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: But when they actually are looking at the unemployment numbers dropping, they are not

counting the fact that a lot of that unemployment has been exported to other countries.

That's the reality of our people. Because as we stand here, understanding that some of our people are figuring out whether they can continue to live in the house that the generation before them built, they are having to decide that they are going to sell out. And the majority of those sales are from Black Bermudians. And the majority of those purchases are from foreigners. Under the Government that wants us to celebrate everything that they have done. That means you have to tell the whole story, not just the part that you want people to hear.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: They don't want us to talk about propaganda.

But Mr. Speaker, as we talk about the housing that is being built in the country, or about to be built, we have to talk about the people who tonight have nowhere to live. And that has been day after day after day. That number has continued to grow. The homeless number has grown faster than the international business number on the other side. Because, Mr. Speaker, the more you build the safety net, the more the middle class has been caught in that net. You have to grow the economy.

We have a crisis [in] our population. An ageing population, low birth rate, more and more people moving to the retirement age. And as we have heard over and over again those people, our people, our seniors who built this country, more of them are finding themselves where? On Financial Assistance. Because they can't survive in the country that they helped to build. You've had 30 years to create the progress. How many more days are you going to blame the four years of the One Bermuda Alliance? And you've had nine years, that you talked about today all the wonderful things you've done.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: And one more time. Over and over again. The population is getting tired of those excuses and us talking about all these things that we did 10 years ago, 8 years ago, 5 years ago. They want to know what we're going to do right now to help them.

Mr. Speaker, as we are preparing for this national holiday that we all want to celebrate, that cost of living which keeps growing is strangling our population. They're going to go into those grocery stores and want to celebrate and not be able to afford all the things that they used to be able to afford. And that's the reality of more and more of our population. And while that is happening, our young people have started to hurt each

other and continue to hurt each other. And the numbers are getting worse and younger.

Mr. Speaker, week after week, MP Richardson pointed out that the behaviour on our roads must stop. When we talk about it . . . there are multiple levels. It's got to be education. It's got to be enforcement. We have to make changes from a legislative standpoint.

But we also have to make sure that personal accountability happens in our country. But the example has got to be set here. We can't set laws and then break them. We have to make sure that we are holding each other accountable and being transparent. And not just saying the word, meaning it. Don't talk about collaboration and then have zero collaboration over and over again. *This is what we are going to share with you* the day of. And the population thinks that everybody up here is actually trying to do what's best and then get upset if the Opposition doesn't agree blindly with everything that is put in front of them in the five seconds that we got to read it.

The reality is, not all things are great. And it's not about doom and gloom. It's the reality that people live in. If we stay on this trajectory, the population continues to decline. And as it declines, that means that the price of everything has to go up. And it continues to go up. And if you don't have a plan on how you're going to change that trajectory, then that's the case. That's where we are. And there doesn't seem to be a plan. And if there is one, we are here to hear it, [in] multiple sessions. We haven't heard it yet.

An Hon. Member: Heard what?

Hon. Ben Smith: The plan of how you're going to change the trajectory that we are on right now. Because it's not going to be the CIT that's going to fix it.

Mr. Speaker, every day another Bermudian family makes the decision to sell out of the country they helped to build, sell that house and move because they can't afford the health care and they can't afford the groceries and they can't afford the BELCO bill. And they say: *You know what? There's a better life for me somewhere outside of the country.*

It's not just our young people. It's multiples. Mr. Speaker, we have our university students coming back. And some of them are saying: *I can't actually go out at night because I don't feel safe in my community.* Does that seem like a place that they want to come back to? When you're young you want to be out. You want to be active. You want to be social. And we can't take it for granted because we can be out, be social. What's the impact on the next generation if they feel that they can't? That their lives are being threatened. They can't move around easily.

When will those things become the priority? When will we be standing here with legislation that is actually going to help impact that change? Stop talking about it. Let's actually do it. Because, Mr. Speaker, as we stand here right now . . . another accident on the

road. The country is numb. It's every day. Cars flipped over. Another bike accident. Somebody else hurt. Another one in the emergency room. Shootings happen. And it's condolences, if it is a death; if not, prayers.

Mr. Speaker, it's not good enough. You can't keep getting up here and patting yourself on the back for what you think you've accomplished. And then spend the rest of the time ticking the box of whatever it is on the checklist that you got to get done before you leave.

It's time to put the country and its people first.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier will get up and give the same speech that he's given over and over again, and pat himself on the back—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: —pat himself on the back for all of the things that he thinks he accomplished. But the population doesn't actually *feel* the things that he continues to tell them.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: It's amazing.

Hon. Ben Smith: The difference is this isn't about voting. See? That's the difference.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: You are only worrying about elections. Why don't you actually worry about the community and what they're actually dealing with? Because the truth is the voter turnout is telling you that they have turned off from politics completely.

[Inaudible interjection]

An Hon. Member: And they still won't vote for you.

Hon. E. David Burt: They've turned off of you.

Hon. Ben Smith: The truth of the matter is: Don't worry about the election. Worry about your population and what this looks like 5 years from now, 10 years from now and 20 years from now.

What did you build? What's left behind?

An Hon. Member: More houses.

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Ben Smith: More houses for who to live in if our people aren't here anymore?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, as we move into this Cup Match holiday, I want us to reflect on where we are now and where we want to go as a community. And I want us to make sure that anybody in our community understands, as we have always said, you have to protect each other, protect your neighbours, look out for each other, speak up when you see things that are happening that shouldn't be happening, behave responsibly on our roads.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: But guess what? It's been falling on deaf ears to keep repeating it. Mr. Speaker, the behaviour doesn't change.

Each time we come back, more have fallen prey [since] the last time we gave one of these speeches. So, it's time for us to have an intervention. And it's the Government's responsibility to provide that intervention. Or they can sit still. And the truth is, there's a lot of silence from a lot of people who have been elected to do the job, to represent all the different communities.

Just remember, if you are silent, that means you are complicit. So, if you do not believe in what's happening right now, and you haven't spoken up, you're part of the problem.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: Or maybe they have just been sitting quiet and collecting a cheque, Mr. Speaker. That's the responsibility part that has to happen.

Everyone talks about being responsible to their constituents. But I guess all the silence means that everybody is in agreement that the education system is doing amazingly well, and the health in our country is doing amazingly well, and that more and more of our seniors are not having to go to Financial Assistance.

I guess the silence is saying that they agree with the Premier that everything is going really well because he's amazing and his Cabinet is amazing. I guess that's where the silence is coming from.

But, Mr. Speaker, there has to be a time [when] they're going to have to stand up and speak and say whether they agree with that or whether they think that things need to be different. Because more of the same will get the same results.

You might win an election. But you're winning an election with no people in the country. And if that is what you're looking for as a win, because as the population shrinks and less people are participating in elections,—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Ben Smith: —you can still win an election.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Christopher Famous: Every country has experienced birth rate decline. What is he talking about?

Hon. E. David Burt: He doesn't know what he is talking about. He is just making noise.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Ben Smith: Mr. Speaker, and every country that has that issue is working really hard to fix the problem.

Mr. Scott Pearman: There you go.

Hon. Ben Smith: So once again, you can sit quiet and allow it to continue to move in that direction, or maybe the plan is that they're going to move down south. I don't know what that is. But they need to figure it out because the people in Bermuda who built this place who still want to stay here, they're looking for guidance on how that's going to happen.

That means leadership. That means actually telling them how you are going to go from where we are and the trajectory we are on into one that is going to move us to the country that I think everybody wants to see. Or we are just going to hear more announcements, and we are going to do more legislation that actually isn't helping anybody.

Hon. E. David Burt: Wow.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Ben Smith: Because, Mr. Speaker, if the Premier is honest and does go back and look through each of the things that have been approved since this session started [in] 2026, how many of those Bills have actually led to real difference in Bermudians' lives? Real ones. Because there's a difference between giving somebody a pension, and that person still not being able to keep their lights on, not being able to pay for the food that they need to have on their table. There's a difference. Yes, they struggle a tiny bit less, but they are still really struggling.

Now what we have is a population that's struggling in silence because we have a government that is more into winning elections than taking care of their people.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Opposition Leader.

Deputy Premier, you're on your feet. Would you like your 20 minutes?

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would. I was packed up ready to go.

An Hon. Member: That's a lie.

Another Hon. Member: Now, come on.

The Speaker: Well, the Premier said he was the only one speaking tonight.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, that's what we thought.

Hon. E. David Burt: We just thought we were going to get: Happy Cup Match.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You know what?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I did that last time, and you tricked me.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I would advise anyone, any Bermudian who is still awake and listening, go back to this morning about 10 [minutes] after 10:00 to about 20 [minutes before] 11:00 and listen to the 30 minutes of improvements and benefits that we have accomplished and given to our people over the last eight, nine years.

The Speaker: One second.

MP Famous. Are you leaving?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay, you may need [to be] in the Chair if I . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Yes. Stay around. Because there isn't anyone left in the panel of chairs.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Oh, yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would suspect if I need it, Mr. Speaker . . . I don't know if I'll need it. But if I do, I know you'll give me a couple of extra minutes that I lost there that time.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier said this morning when he gave that list of accomplishments, I don't know how he squeezed it in in 30 minutes. And I know he didn't get it . . . he didn't get it all. But he did say . . . he did say, and we continue to say on this side, we will not get everything right. We may not get it . . . we may not

get the things done that we want done as quick as we would like. But if the people of this country were that dissatisfied with the performance of the Progressive Labour Party, it's no way on God's living earth that they would have returned us to power three elections in a row.

An Hon. Member: And landslides elections.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And landslides at that

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Landslides at that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So, when they talk about the people in this country and they talk about the decisions that they have made, I look at the elections in which we have won.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Opposition Leader talked about young people. And he talked about bad driving. Mr. Speaker, we can make all the laws we want in this country. We can give the police all the support they want. And we have. But, Mr. Speaker, we cannot control what young people decide to do, as they have done in recent times. We cannot control—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Is it their fault? Yes, it's—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Those young . . . those young . . . those young people who are shooting at one another . . . You're saying that it's the Government's fault? You're saying the bad driving is the Government's fault? We need to do something, Mr. Speaker? Really?

An Hon. Member: It's their fault.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We have increased the amount of money we have given to the police.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: In large . . . large . . . I'm talking about millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker. And I've sat in meetings with the Commissioner and the Premier and Cabinet colleagues. And we've told the Commissioner: *You will never, ever come to us and ask for money to do your job to look after the people of this country and will not get it from us. You will get it.* And we have given millions of dollars, Mr. Speaker, increased money [has been] given to the police over and over again to assist them to do the very things in which Members opposite spoke [to].

But, Mr. Speaker, then they talk about cars turning over and people speeding. Mr. Speaker, really? You're going to put that on the Government? Mr. Speaker, when you talk about the young people, and say: *What are you doing for the young people in this country?* Mr. Speaker, we have given out more scholarships, after they cut scholarships.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They cut scholarships in their five years. We've returned it where we've given out more scholarships than any time in our history. We have free Bermuda College on top of that, Mr. Speaker. We have apprenticeship programmes that our young people are taking advantage of. We are doing what we can to encourage young people to make good citizens of themselves.

And when they talk about the young people, you will know, Mr. Speaker, because you attend events at BI [Bermuda Institute] like I do, as well as other events around this country to different schools. We have a lot of talent in this country. We have a few individuals who need some help. But we have a lot of talent in this country. And we have a lot of young people who are doing positive things in this country.

Don't put them all in one basket, Mr. Speaker, because it's not fair. We have a lot of young people who have talent. They work very hard, whether it's in school or whether it's in sports. And we, this Government, support them. And I would like to think that we could take some credit for giving them the tools so that they can enjoy life. They can make themselves better students. They can make themselves better sports people.

Mr. Speaker, they talked about unemployment. We have the lowest unemployment levels we've seen in decades in this country. And then they said it was because people are leaving

An Hon. Member: Yes, they have left.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's not . . . Look, Mr. Speaker, they keep saying that.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: People have been leaving this country, Mr. Speaker. I remember when I was a young boy. I had a lot of my family leave this country. A lot of them. And you do too, Mr. Speaker. A lot of people left Bermuda. But guess what? They came back. And guess what they're doing now, Mr. Speaker? They're coming back.

An Hon. Member: No, they aren't.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they are.

Mr. Speaker, I have a family member of which I will speak about, who left here six years ago to go to

the UK because they said: *Things are going to be cheaper out there. I know they will.* Mr. Speaker, he'll be back here next month because he said the groceries out there have doubled in six years. And he is not . . . It is not the *God-save-me* place that he thought it was. He'll be back here next month. He said the UK has gotten so expensive and so out of hand. They don't want to be there.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: So yes, people leave Bermuda. They've been doing it for decades, Mr. Speaker. Nothing new. Nothing new at all.

Mr. Speaker, we talk about housing people. The Opposition Leader said: *Housing people? What's the sense of building all these houses? They ain't got nowhere to live.* Let me make this statement, Mr. Speaker. I announced two weeks ago that we are going to build 200 homes in the next 14 months.

An Hon. Member: There's no people. Where are they going to live?

Another Hon. Member: Yes, there's no people left.

Another Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: There's no people left. So the Honourable . . . see how lost they are? They are so out of touch, Mr. Speaker. *We don't have any people left.* So, I guess I'm going to build homes, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We don't have people.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair. Talk to the Chair. Talk to the Chair.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But we have 500 families on the waiting list.

The Speaker: Talk to the Chair.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We will build homes, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we will. And we're not just going to build 200.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Because I announced earlier today, we're starting phase 2.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And within the next 24 months, Mr. Speaker, if I have my way, we'll have 400 new homes.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And on top of that, Mr. Speaker, when we start filling these homes, where people are out there paying too much rent, and they're struggling just to pay that rent, those places are going to be empty. And guess what's going to happen, Mr. Speaker? Those prices are going to come down too. We build 400 homes people are going to fill . . . we will fill them up quickly. And where they're staying now, those places are going to . . . oh yes, they're going to become available. And people, if economics . . . you know how it works, Mr. Speaker, supply and demand. So, I'm looking for those prices to drop, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I am.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader can talk about gloom and doom all he wants. But, Mr. Speaker, let me tell you something. In fact, I'll quote. He said *the economy is stagnant*.

Where is he living?

An Hon. Member: Cuckoo.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Is he living in cloud cuckoo land?

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Local economy. Local economy is stagnant.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Local economy? Are you crazy, Mr. Speaker? Listen, I, Mr. Speaker,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I own . . . I own—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, as you know, Mr. Speaker, I own several businesses and I have a lot of friends that have business.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's economy is booming.

An Hon. Member: For rich people.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We cannot even keep up the supply of block in this country.

An Hon. Member: For rich people.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And the Honourable Member is saying *for rich people*. I'll tell you what, you know what? Who do we encourage? What? Is there something wrong with Bermuda having wealthy people?

An Hon. Member: No, not at all.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Bermuda has wealthy people. We have Black wealthy people, too. If that's what you're insinuating, you know?

An Hon. Member: Yes, we do.

[Inaudible interjections]

[Mr. Christopher Famous, Acting Speaker, in the Chair]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now, but Mr. . . . Mr. Acting Speaker, you look good in that Chair. You look good. You look good in that Chair, too.

But Mr. Acting Speaker, right? They complained about all the people we have on Financial Assistance.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, when they were in power, it was almost non-existent. It was almost non-existent.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We give out over a million dollars a week for Financial Assistance.

An Hon. Member: And the number is growing.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We . . . and the number is growing.

Hon. E. David Burt: That not incorrect.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's incorrect. No, the number of support—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —the number of support is growing. We continue to do things for our people. If people are struggling, they go [to] Financial Assistance. We assist them. That's what we do. When they were in power, zero.

An Hon. Member: Here we go again.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They cut everything.

An Hon. Member: There we go.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Then they talk about our young people. The first thing they did in 2012 is cut at-risk youth programmes. Cut them all. That's the type of things that they did when they were . . . And you know what? It was a lesson for people in this country.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Keep looking backwards.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It was a lesson. That five years . . . because a lot of people, especially our Progressive Labour Party people from 1998 to 2012, they only knew a Progressive Labour Party Government. But one thing the OBA showed when they were in power [was], they will cut, they won't worry about the people in this country, and they'll look after their own. That's what they'll do. They'll tell our seniors that money doesn't grow on trees, but they found \$100 million for America's Cup.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, point of order, point of order.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They found \$40 million for Cross Island—

The Acting Speaker: Will you take the point of order?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: What do you mean?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, the Honourable Member's misleading the House. Yes, again. He got me so upset I forgot what I was going to say.

[Laughter]

The Acting Speaker: So, you have no point of order?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes . . . No, he's—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He is taking up my time, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, no—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He can't even—

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no, no, no, we're not taking up your time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What's your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Unfortunately, the Honourable Member is misleading the House to even suggest that we took care of our own. We just talked tonight on a Bill that was presented about taking care of your own.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: All right. That's his point of order.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, come on now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay, thank you. Thank you very much.

We know that when they were in power, who took care of who. And for 400 years, we watched them—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: For 400 years, we watched them take care of their own, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, point of order, point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Do you have an established point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: The Honourable Member is misleading the House. It is this Government who is giving tax credits to the very people that he's talking about that . . . he is saying we support it. Allshores is getting tax credits to buy back their own shares. Come on now.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, the Premier has clarified that point over and over and over.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Over and over and over.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But look, Mr. Acting Speaker, let's not forget.

Hon. E. David Burt: Tell them.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We are still fighting to try and resolve Morgan's Point. That number now has climbed to close to \$225 million. Mr. Acting Speaker, \$225 million of the taxpayers' money for Morgan's Point. And the thing is, their former Finance Minister said he would do it again.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Point of order, Mr. Speaker, Mr. [Acting] Speaker.

The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He's speaking as if that's the only thing we're still trying to pay off. We're still trying to pay off a hospital that costs more than what they paid off at Morgan's Point.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's not a point of order.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And it's still going on and carrying debt.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's not a point of order, Mr. Acting Speaker.

Mr. [Acting] Speaker, let's talk about the airport.

An Hon. Member: Yes, let's.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let's talk about \$40 million on Cross Island—\$40 million, which we are still paying off.

An Hon. Member: Build some houses on it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Dr. Brown's investigation—\$10 million and counting. Commission of Inquiry, another million. Remember, all these things were taking place when they told our seniors that money doesn't grow on trees.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Where's the tree?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Money doesn't grow on trees.

An Hon. Member: Oh, it's the CIT.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let's remember what they've done.

Now, Mr. Acting Speaker, let me remind, maybe they don't get it on that side, but I tell you what we get on this side. If I walk anywhere in this country,—

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —people thank us for the work that we have done and continue to do every single day.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And they back it up when they come to the election polls.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Three elections in a row, landslide victories.

An Hon. Member: Landslide?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The people in this country continue to speak to us, and they continue to show them who they trust. When you talk about trust, they show us who they trust and who they don't trust.

Now, they talk about the economies and . . . and . . . What did he say?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: All right, I'll get it. The economy is stagnant. Well—

An Hon. Member: The local economy.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The local economy is stagnant? Okay. The local economy is stagnant. You haven't been down on Front Street lately, Mr. Acting Speaker?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It's called Brookfield. I am down on Front Street every day. I go down there . . . I see Brookfield building. I go down a little—

An Hon. Member: Brookfield?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: That's not local economy. That's IB, silly.

An Hon. Member: Come on, man.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Look, that's not local—

The Acting Speaker: Honourable Member, please have a seat.

Honourable Scott Pearman, please don't use that language.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Silly?

The Acting Speaker: Yes. You think you are too—you're smart enough to know what I meant.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you for that, Mr. [Acting] Speaker, because that's certainly unparliamentary language. You got to him before I did.

But Mr. [Acting] Speaker, who builds these buildings? When you say they're local . . . So, what did they say? I guess Southampton Princess, I guess Fairmont Southampton is not local either.

An Hon. Member: We are still waiting for that one.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Right? I suppose the massive office block that's being constructed down on the western end of Front Street, I guess that's not local either.

But it's funny because they wouldn't know it because they weren't in the House. But I remember Grant Gibbons standing up in the House and bragging about all the construction that took place in this country. And most of it was the foreigners. One minute we say: *We need foreign investment in this country.* Now we got it they are saying: *Well, what's the local econ—? That's not . . . that don't count because it's not local.* Really?

An Hon. Member: Oh, you don't like the local economy?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Really?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The fact of the matter is, is that under this Government,—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I know because I know a lot of people who are in the business, our people who have businesses. And guess what? All of them are busy right now. All of them are busy.

An Hon. Member: What business?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I challenge them, any local business . . . and you tell me that they're out of work. And I want to know who they are.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: There are boards on the windows on Front Street.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Let me tell you something, Mr. Acting Speaker, I happen to supply a lot of the local businesses with materials for their work. And guess what? All of them are busy. And I tell you what they tell me every day. *Keep doing what you're doing. You guys are doing a fantastic job.* And we will, because no matter how much noise they make, no matter how much gloom and doom they preach, no matter how many boogeymen they pull out of their back pockets, that will

not stop us from driving this economy and looking after our people.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does anyone else wish to speak?

Mr. Speaker, you have . . . Mr. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Well, Mr. . . . Hold on.

The Acting Speaker: Just call me Captain.

[Pause]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: While the Premier is getting set up, I still had a minute left. Do you remember? The Speaker owed me a minute.

I'd like to wish all my fans Happy Cup Match. Thank you, Mr. [Acting] Speaker. That's all I want. And look, all these seniors get in free on Thursday and Friday. Don't forget.

An Hon. Member: Somerset!

Hon. E. David Burt: The Speaker is back.

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

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Thank you, sir.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I see that my time has started.

The Speaker: No—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You've got three minutes.

The Speaker: Well, wait, wait, let me get this sorted out.

**CORRECTION TO:
REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING
PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE: COMPLIANCE
WITH PROCUREMENT RULES, FINANCIAL
INSTRUCTIONS, GOVERNANCE AND VALUE FOR
MONEY OF COVID-19 TRAVEL AUTHORISATION,
PROCUREMENT AND OPERATION**

Hon. E. David Burt: Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, you don't have to worry about the clock, because I can assure you I will not even come close to using it.

Before I deal with the uncontrolled vitriol that was shared by the Opposition Leader earlier, Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise on a very important point. And, Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise to briefly correct a serious,

factual statement or error contained in the Public Accounts Committee report that was tabled earlier today.

The Speaker: Hmmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: That report states that on the 24th of August 2020, the Premier signed a BPMS contract which duplicated the travel authorisation system and also provides a \$2.5 million guarantee. Matters I've spoken about in this House already and have said is false.

Mr. Speaker, that statement is false. I signed a service agreement that had no financial commitment at all. That agreement contained no guarantee, created no obligation for the Government to pay any funding, and did not make the Government a guarantor of that loan. A statement from Public Accounts Committee that says that I was a guarantor of a loan when there is plenty of factual evidence of the otherwise is disappointing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, what I will say is . . . I just hope you would listen, please.

The \$2.5 million guarantee was in a separate legal instrument relating to a loan made to Interfund. It was executed appropriately 10 months later by the then Minister of Finance. In the [contemporaneous] emails, the financial records and the parliamentary record all establish that fact. The government's own records also state that the agreement I signed was correct before any binding acts were taken and that a subsequent contract was executed by the appropriate public officer.

Mr. Speaker, these are not differences of opinion. They are different documents, different dates, different legal obligations, and different signatories.

I was never invited to appear before the committee, nor was I given an opportunity to respond before the serious allegation was placed inside of a parliamentary report. Mr. Speaker, parliamentary committees rightly demand accuracy, accountability, and proper process from the government. They must also be held to those same standards.

I will shortly file a formal response supported by the relevant documentary evidence and request that the parliamentary record be corrected. I will accept legitimate criticism of my decisions, but I will not allow a demonstrably false assertion to become accepted as fact simply because it's been printed in a parliamentary report.

And I just need to make that submission at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, rather than waiting on September and rising on a matter of personal explanation, as I know the way that the media likes to treat things in this country, and it's very easy for persons to say falsehoods.

So, I rose two years ago when the report was first written by the Auditor General and said that it was

factually incorrect. That is the record of this House. Then we get the same factual incorrectness repeated by a Public Accounts Committee.

An Hon. Member: Wow.

Hon. E. David Burt: Of course, Mr. Speaker, I will deal with that particular matter as well, but I need to raise that particular matter to you and make sure that it is on the record from the floor in this House.

PLP BUILDING A FAIRER BERMUDA, REPLY TO OBA RESPONSE

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, typically, Mr. Speaker, right before Cup Match holiday, it is usual for persons to get up and share particular greetings. Unfortunately, however, the House and the listening public, those who may still be up at 1:36 am, although I know some people may listen tomorrow, were treated to (my words) the uncontrolled vitriol of the Opposition Leader.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: And here's my view, Mr. Speaker, and it is particularly interesting because it's remarkably personal. I mean, whether it is him [or] the Opposition Leader before that, the Opposition Leader before that, the Opposition Leader before that, the Opposition Leader before that—all of them—they go after me personally as an individual. They go after me, saying the administration, all the rest, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. But guess what, Mr. Speaker? They continue to lose. It doesn't work. It is interesting, but here's the thing, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. I am the proud son of Gerald Burt from Jubilee Road, Devonshire, a proud Bermudian, tradesman, carpenter, mason. And I'm the proud son of a proud Jamaican woman. Jamaican, yes. And here's the thing: The mix between those bloods, Mr. Speaker, gives me incredibly broad shoulders.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I have been able to handle every single thing that the Opposition has attempted to throw at me.

But I have come to accept, Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Opposition Leader's hostility is just the sincerest form of political frustration. Because three consecutive election victories can be very difficult for people to process. They cannot understand how, in their version of the world, in their version of Bermuda, where everything is wrong—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Tell them.

Hon. E. David Burt: —that the people of this country continue to send the Progressive Labour Party back to this place with super majorities. They can't handle it.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, they can't.

Hon. E. David Burt: And so, whether or not they try to attack progress, whether or not they try to say that all is bad, whether or not they come after you personally, whatever it is that they do, here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. It's not working. And here's what they say: *Patting himself on the back*. I don't need to pat myself on the back, Mr. Speaker. We just come here and deliver for the people of Bermuda.

And here's one of the things that was said. It was quite surprising. They said there was silence from persons and they were complicit.

An Hon. Member: They are still silent.

Hon. E. David Burt: Complicit? Complicit in what today, Mr. Speaker? Complicit in what? Let's remember what we did today. We passed a Criminal Justice Reform Bill that was born out of the matters and work of which we did last week. We passed an amendment to the Cost of Living Act, objected to by that side, Mr. Speaker—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —passionately fought for by the Honourable Minister who laid out the plans.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: So, here's what we do. So that's fine. They can say what they like. But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. The people of this country agree with us.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: They want their Government to take action. They saw what was in our election manifesto. They said they wanted to support that. They voted for that. And it is our right and responsibility to make sure that we put it into place. And so, when they say silence and complicit, silent and complicit in what?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: What is it? You understand what I'm saying?

So, it's very interesting. They go on this thing. They like . . . it's almost as though if they live in their self-repeating echo chamber of *The Royal Gazette* comments, Facebook comments, and what they discuss down at Port O Call [Restaurant].

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Rather than knocking on the doors and listening to the real things and the pain and troubles in which people are facing. Because, Mr. Speaker, that is what we deal with every week.

So, then we talk about the matters. What else came today? Whether it's health insurance reform changes or matters related to discrimination of which people are facing in this country, Mr. Speaker. So, when we sit here—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —when we sit here and talk about complicit and silence and not doing anything and not progressing, it's all nonsense, Mr. Speaker. But I get it. I get it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They are hurt badly.

Hon. E. David Burt: I get it.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker. The people did not send us here to discuss his feelings about me. They sent us here to discuss the business of Bermuda, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: And we continue to progress that business each and every single day, Mr. Speaker. Because that is the reality of the work of which we do.

And yes, this morning, Mr. Speaker, I gave a Statement and people will hear that Statement over and over and over again. Because the reality is that after nine years there are demonstrable changes in this Island. And for what we have said we were going to do, what we promised that we're going to do, and the work of which we're continuing to deliver, Mr. Speaker, it is something that is immense personal pride. But it is not personal only. It is immense pride to the over 2,000 members of the Progressive Labour Party who get to say that is what my party has accomplished in Government.

And in that exact same Statement, Mr. Speaker, I did not claim perfection because no one is perfect. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that we continue to progress. We continue to push forward. And it pains,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —pains my detractors,—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, it does.

Hon. E. David Burt: —pains them immensely that I can continue to work forward and lead this Government to deliver week in and week out with accomplishments, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud to have an amazing Cabinet. I am proud to have an amazing Backbench. I'm proud to have an amazing party executive. I am proud to have an amazing party, Mr. Speaker, that is able to deliver on so many things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that over the Cup Match holiday the Honourable Member gets rid of his personal frustrations towards my ability to continue to lead and deliver. Because, you know, there is only going to be four more times that we're going to face off on this particular space before I take my space to the Backbench. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that I think he would probably (it's not for me to give him political advice) . . . he would probably find a little bit more political mileage focusing on issues rather than focusing on individuals. Probably.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Whoa.

Hon. E. David Burt: Probably find a little bit more mileage than focusing on individuals, because their game plan has not worked for nine years. And I'm just saying if they want to continue it, that's on them.

CUP MATCH

Hon. E. David Burt: Now, Mr. Speaker, let me turn to what's the normal thing in which we get up and speak about these wonderful times. It is this holiday that we are approaching, Mr. Speaker. Now, of course, Mr. Speaker, people will read about this holiday, will read the messages, and persons know that I absolutely enjoy the Cup Match holiday. I enjoy the Cup Match holiday. I remember my first time attending Cup Match because, you know, Mr. Speaker, I don't like cricket. I do not like cricket. I am not a cricket fan at all. I'm a football guy. And I went—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —I went . . . I remember it was 2007 because every year I went . . . you know, I lived away for a very long time. Cup Match would happen. I would just say: *That's a long weekend, a long vacation. I'll go away. I'll take a trip.*

And I remember someone convinced me to stay for Cup Match in 2007 in St. George's, and convinced me that I should get a camp and all the rest and different things. And, Mr. Speaker, I had the most

amazing time at that Cup Match. And I remember the following year I invited so many friends who came down and there were 30-something friends from overseas who came down and enjoyed it. And it has come to be without question my favourite holiday. I enjoy the spirit. I enjoy the camaraderie. I enjoy it.

But here's the thing, Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Member for constituency 11 had said, that it is this Progressive Labour Party that made sure we decolonised Cup Match.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: And that's something that is important because my comment that will be read inside the Cup Match booklet (which I'll preview here) is: There'll be many persons in this country that will never actually know that those holidays were not called Emancipation Day and Mary Prince Day.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That's right.

Hon. E. David Burt: That they were called Cup Match Day and Somers Day.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: There are many people who will not know that we made sure that we made those changes so we can tie through for the reason that we had.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's important that the record reflect and history continues to be told that that holiday was not one that was given. That was a holiday that was taken. That was for those who were emancipated who said: *We are not going to work. We are going to celebrate our emancipation and force the government finally to relent many years afterwards to give a particular holiday.* But it was not until 1998 that the Progressive Labour Party was elected that that holiday was changed to the actual title of what it celebrates: Emancipation Day.

And then at the urging of the Honourable Member for constitution 11 in 2018 or 2019, the second day of Cup Match was changed to Mary Prince Day in honour of our National Hero, and someone who was very well tied to the abolition movement and the emancipation of slaves inside of the British territories, Mr. Speaker.

So, we have a special and unique holiday that we must celebrate and continue to tell the story of why. But the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that what that recognises is activism. It's activism in our communities. It's activism here.

Now, here's what I'll say, Mr. Speaker . . . Ah, no, I'm not going to go down that road. You know, leave it alone right now. Not today.

The activism of which we see that led to this holiday is the activism which we need inside of our

communities. Because we saw that we did work today on justice. We saw that we worked on discrimination. We saw we did work today on health care. We saw we did work. But the reality is that these things have to be picked up and carried, not just by the politicians here, not just by the members of our parties, but the everyday citizens to make sure they play their parts in our democracy as well, Mr. Speaker.

Because when we pass laws, and if there are matters related to discrimination, if there are matters related to challenges, if there are challenges of which you are facing, then you have to speak up. You have to say something. You have to make sure that you hold the persons accountable. You have to make sure that you say MP this, MP that and all the rest. We get those messages to respond because that's how this holiday started. It started by people taking matters into their own hands. That is the power of community and the power of democracy, Mr. Speaker. And it's impressive.

So, this year, somehow, Mr. Speaker, without inviting anyone, I've managed to outdo what happened in 2008, or what is going to happen. My wife and I are welcoming over 50 visitors to the Island for this holiday. Someone had joked and said that I should start my own tourism firm or all the rest. But people want to come to Bermuda.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, they do.

Hon. E. David Burt: People want to come to Bermuda, Mr. Speaker. They enjoy when they come here. They bring their friends. Some people have been to Cup Match three and four times and are bringing like 10 friends and saying: *It is the best time. You have to come and experience it.*

And so, we have something really special in this country. And I know that we as human beings have a propensity to focus on the negative. But at least at some point in time, recognise that there are some rays of sunshine that exist inside of our community, Mr. Speaker. They're raised inside of our sunshine.

When we see students graduating from the CedarBridge or The Berkeley Institute, we see the rays of sunshine. We see persons graduate from Bermuda College on College Promise. We see those rays of sunshine where it goes to the internship programmes down in the young people, whether ABIR or BILTIR or ABIC and all the rest who are doing their work, who are playing their part, who are doing their items, and all the rest, Mr. Speaker. We see those rays of sunshine in our future. It is our responsibility to make sure that we support them.

And here's the one thing that you will get from this Government, Mr. Speaker. You will get reality. You will understand that we will support those who are doing well because the reality is that there is a lot to celebrate.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope, wish and pray for a safe holiday for all. I do know that

without question, the security services, everyone will be out in force, making sure to make sure everyone is safe. But it's also a matter of personal responsibility. It is very simple. As the Honourable Junior Minister said earlier, if you're going to be intoxicated, do not get behind the wheel. Please make sure . . . find a way, catch a friend, do something else, please. It is important. The one thing that we do not wish is to have additional tragedy on this particular holiday.

And please recognise and know with the additional support, funding and money that we've given to the Bermuda Police Service and the work that they will be there to make sure to keep us safe as possible.

So, I wish everyone a very happy Emancipation Day, a very happy Mary Prince Day, a very happy Cup Match holiday. And of course, Mr. Speaker, the record will reflect that should Somerset keep the Cup, I would have never—

The Speaker: But they will.

Hon. E. David Burt: —I would have never in my time as Premier have to ever have given that Cup to the Blue and Blue side. With that, have a happy Cup Match, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

CUP MATCH

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Members, it's been quite a long day, probably one of the longest sessions we've had in quite a while. So, I want to thank you all for your participation today.

And I'm going to just take a couple of minutes to comment on where the Premier almost wrapped up on a reference to the Emancipation holiday. And as many in this room would know, we in the Somerset and the friends of Somerset have been doing our Emancipation walk, Cup Match walk prior to Cup Match. We'll be doing it again this year, the weekend before Cup Match. And we invite you all to come out and learn a little bit more the history of Emancipation and Cup Match.

Premier, you talked about how we were not *given*, we *took* the holiday. We claimed it as a 113 year protest. It was 113 years of us taking a holiday, taking the day before we got it as an official holiday. And we speak to all of that. So, you can come out next Tuesday night. We'll be doing an Emancipation topic at Somerset Cricket Club. The time for it has gone away from me right now, but it's been advertised.

And then the Saturday before we're doing the walk. So, feel free to come out throughout the Island. Even our St. George's fans come up and enjoy it. And so, we invite everybody from one end to the other end to come up and enjoy it.

With that, as been said already, we are on the best holiday of the year for Bermuda. We encourage as

many people who come on our shores during this time to enjoy the holiday with us as Bermudians. But we also encourage anyone who comes, whether it's local or foreign visitors, that this is a holiday we want everybody to be safe. We want us to enjoy the fun. We enjoy the history. Enjoy the camaraderie that it brings. But we also want us to remember that it takes a little bit of caution on each of us to protect not only ourselves, but those around us. Remember, our families don't want to see us harm ourselves in any way or us to harm anyone else.

So, as has been said already, if you are enjoying the liquid libations and other things, do not, do not get behind the wheel of a car or a boat because there's a lot of activity on the water during the time as well. And we want to keep our water as safe as our roads are. So, enjoy the holiday. Remember the reason for it and the history of it as you enjoy the victory that Somerset will have once again.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: And with that, I now stand and . . . and MP Famous, you are supporting that victory for Somerset in your Blue and Blue. Thank you very much. Even MP Famous is acknowledging that Somerset will have victory this year.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: And with those words, we'll stand adjourned until the 4th of September. Members, have a good holiday season and a good time away from here. Be prepared to come back for a full session in September.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: With that, the House now stands adjourned.

[At 1:52 am, [Saturday, 18 July 2026] the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 4 September 2026.]

[This page intentionally blank.]

**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
2025/2026 SESSION**

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT INDEX

MAY – JULY 2026

*This Index is arranged alphabetically with “Order of Business” headings and MPs’ names in **bold**. “Bills” are arranged both alphabetically and procedurally (i.e., First Reading, Second Reading, Committee, Report, Third Reading).*

A

Adams, Hon. Jache

Adjournment, motions thereon

His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, first reigning king to visit
Bermuda, 2906–2908

Community Beautification Programme: Building Better Communities one Project at a Time,
3235–3236

Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase, 3067–3069, 3072–3073

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 3036

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3202–3203

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3316–3317

National Infrastructure and Community Works across Island, update, 2864–2866

National Parks summer reminder on responsible use, 3096–3097

Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, 3123

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election
Amendment Act 2026, 3368–3370

Single-Use Plastics Act 2026, 2892–2893, 2897–2898

Strategic Investment, strengthening Government through, 2936–2937

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27

Committee of Supply

Ministry of Public Works and Environment

Head 65, 3303–3304

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24

Committee of Supply

Ministry of Public Works and Environment

Head 36-Ministry Headquarters, 2969–2970, 2971

Head 81-Public Lands and Buildings, 2970

Head 82-Works and Engineering, 2970–2971

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25

Committee of Supply

Ministry of Public Works and Environment

Head 36-Ministry Headquarters, 2979

Head 82-Works and Engineering, 2979–2980

Adjournment, motions thereon

Affordable Housing Initiative

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 2911

Allshores Tax Credit

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3140–3141, 3145

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3135–3137

Autism, challenges facing families and Government support initiatives

Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3075–3076

Adjournment, motions thereon (continued)

Backbenchers' role in supporting Government Ministers

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 3075

Bermuda Day

Hayward, Hon. Jason, 2918–2919

Smith, Hon. Ben, 2917

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 2993–2996

The Speaker, 2919–2920

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2916

Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service

Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3212

Bus Pass quandary

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3218–3219

Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 3219–3220

Canine Advisory Committee, release of recommendations

Smith, Ms. Linda, 2987–2988

CARICOM Membership

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 2911–2912

Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3076–3077

Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 3081–3083

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 2909, 2910–2911, 2985, 3379–3380

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3145–3146

Corporate Income Tax Act ripple effects

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3380–3381

Culture

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3146–3148

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2991–2993

Cup Match

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3393–3394

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 3380

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3380, 3381

The Speaker, 3394–3395

Deputy Governors and Public Service Leadership Summit

Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3076

Domestic Violence, malicious rumours of

Hayward, Hon. Jason, 2919

Emergency Room chronic overcrowding

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3148–3149

Government Housing Initiative update

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 2985–2987

Health Insurance Premiums, rising cost of

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3150–3151

Wilson, Hon. Kim N., 3144–3145

His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, first reigning king to visit
Bermuda

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2906–2908

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2915

Holiday weekend safety reminders

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3083–3084

Adjournment, motions thereon (continued)

HSBC ATM Banking

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3213–3214

Insurance, regulating local insurance companies

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2996

Lamb Foggo Urgent Care Centre

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3141–3144

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 3137–3140

Ministerial Code of Conduct

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3135

National Day of Prayer

Dill, Rev. Dr. Emilygail A., 2917–2918

National Heroes Day

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3086

Parliamentary debate, elevating of

Simmons, Mr. Jamahl S., 2990–2991

Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee: Compliance with Procurement Rules,

Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel

Authorisation Procurement and Operation

Correction to

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3390–3391

PLP Government

Building a Fairer Bermuda

DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S., 3384–3390

OBA response

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3381–3384

Reply to OBA response

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3391–3393

not spending energy looking backwards

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3084–3086

Throne Speech agenda

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3151–3153

Political accountability

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3149–3150

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019, outstanding reports

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2996–2998

Premier's leadership and Government's fiscal record

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3078–3081

Premier's reporting obligations to Parliament

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3077–3078

Road Traffic Accidents

Darrell, Hon. Owen, 2904–2905

King, Mr. Robert, 2908–2909

Lawlessness on our roads

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3217–3218

The Speaker, 3220

Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 3133–3134

Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 2902–2904, 2983–2985, 3130–3133

Smith, Hon. Ben, 2916–2917

Smith, Ms. Linda, 2905–2906

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2915–2916

Adjournment, motions thereon (continued)

- Royal Visit Invitation not received by MP
 - Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 2912–2913
- Senhor Santo Cristo Festival
 - Famous, Mr. Christopher, 2910
- Senior Abuse
 - Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3212–3213
 - Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3216–3217
- Signature School Graduation Diploma
 - Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 3134
- Southampton Princess Hotel
 - Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 2913–2915
- Teachers, support for
 - Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2988–2990
 - Simmons, Mr. Jamahl S., 2990
- Warwick Workman's Club family fun day
 - DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3077
- Youth, instilling right morals, ethics and principles in our youth begins at home
 - Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3214–3216
 - Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 3216
- Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Affordable Housing
 - Government's commitment to provide (See Premier's Question Period)
 - Initiative (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
- Airport Rescue and Firefighting, commissioning of new vehicles (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Allshores Tax Credit (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
- Announcements by the Speaker or Member presiding**
 - Adjournment, motions thereon
 - Cup Match, 3394–3395
 - Bermuda Day, 2919–2920
 - Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 3115–3116, 2891, 3115–3116, 3190, 3268
 - Ombudsman Annual Report 2025, 3155
 - Speaker's Rulings
 - Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda
 - Sub judice matters, 3211–3212, 3378–3379
 - Swan, Sir John, KBE, JP
 - Moment of Silence, 2999
 - Special joint parliamentary session to honour, 3087
- Artificial Intelligence, impact on Bermudian workforce (See Premier's Question Period)
- Asphalt Patching Machine (See Question Period)
- Autism
 - challenges facing families and Government support initiatives (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
 - Spectrum Disorder Out of School programmes (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Azores, Official Visit to (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

B

Backbenchers' role in supporting Government Ministers (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Bermuda Airport Authority Annual Report 2023/24 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

Bermuda Day 2026 (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Announcement of Grand Marshall (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026 (See Bills)

Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2025 (See Papers and Other Communications to House; Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Bermuda's Employment and Labour Relations Tribunal Report: Strengthening Enforcement Powers (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Bermuda's Fiscal Progress, independent rating agencies confirm (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Bermudian household purchasing power (See Premier's Question Period)

Bills

Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026

First Reading, 3190

Second Reading

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3292

Wilson, Hon. Kim N., 3291–3292

Committee, 3292–3294

Report, 3294

Third Reading, 3377

Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 2963

Second Reading

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 3117

Hayward, Hon. Jason, 3116–3117

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3117

Committee, 3117–3118

Report, 3118

Third Reading, 3129

Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3190

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3269–3270

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3270

Committee, 3270–3272

Report, 3272

Third Reading, 3376

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026

First Reading, 3191

Second Reading

Adams, Hon. Jache, 3316–3317

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3324–3329

Darrell, Hon. Owen, 3312–3314

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3317–3321

Bills (continued)

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 (continued)

Second Reading (continued)

King, Mr. Robert, 3316
Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 3306–3310, 3331–3333
Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3314–3316
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3329
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3310–3312
Scott, Mr. W. Lawrence, 3321–3324
Smith, Hon. Ben, 3330–3331
Smith, Ms. Linda, 3314

Committee, 3333–3339

Report, 3340

Third Reading, 3378

Electricity Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 2963

Second Reading

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3059–3061
Fahy, Hon. Michael, 3055–3057
Hayward, Hon. Jason, 3052–3055
Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 3048–3050, 3061–3063
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3057–3059
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3050–3051
Smith, Ms. Linda, 3051–3052

Committee, 3063–3067

Report, 3067

Third Reading, 3074

Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3268

Second Reading

DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S., 3352
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3352
Wilson, Hon. Kim N., 3351–3352

Committee, 3352–3353

Report, 3353

Third Reading, 3377

Human Rights Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3190

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3281–3282
Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3280
DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S., 3280–3281
Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3272–3274, 3282–3283
Hayward, Hon. Jason, 3278
Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 3279–3280
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3275–3278, 3283
Smith, Hon. Ben, 3278–3279
Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3274–3275

Committee, 3284–3288

Report, 3288

Third Reading, 3376

Bills (continued)

Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026

First Reading, 3130

Second Reading

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3340–3342, 3348

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3342–3344

Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 3346–3348

Weeks, Mr. Michael A., 3344–3346

Committee, 3348–3350

Clause 3 amended, 3349

Report, 3350

Third Reading, 3378

Motor Car and Auxiliary Bicycles (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3269

Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026

First Reading, 2963

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3041

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3041

Committee, 3041–3043

Report, 3043

Third Reading, 3073

Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 2963

Second Reading

Adams, Mr. Jache, 3123

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3119–3120, 3123–3127

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3120, 3121–3122

Furber, Hon. Tinee, 3122–3123

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3122

Committee, 3127–3129

Clause 2 amended, 3127

Preamble amended, 3128

Report, 3129

Third Reading, 3130

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election

Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 2964

Second Reading

Adams, Hon. Jache, 3368–3370

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3356–3358

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3358–3360

DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S., 3370–3372

Division, 3375

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 3364–3366

Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 3360–3363

Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 3353–3356, 3372–3374

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3366–3368

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3363–3364

Bills (continued)

Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 2892

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 2964–2966

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2966

Committee, 2966–2968

Report, 2968

Third Reading, 2983

Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 2963

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3037, 3039

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3037–3038

Hayward, Hon. Jason, 3038

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3038–3039

Committee, 3039–3040

Report, 3040

Third Reading, 3074

Road Traffic and Motor Car (Road Safety and Penalties) Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3191

Single-Use Plastics Act 2026

Second Reading

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2892–2893, 2897–2898

Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 2897

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 2895–2896

Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 2896

Smith, Ms. Linda, 2894

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 2894–2895

Committee, 2898–2901

Report, 2901

Third Reading, 2901

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3294

Committee of Supply

Ministry of Digital Innovation

Head 66-Department of Information and Digital Technologies

Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 3305–3306

Ministry of Education

Head 41-Bermuda College

Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 3299–3300, 3301–3302, 3303

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3300–3301, 3302

Ministry of Justice

Head 25-Corrections

Hayward, Hon. Jason, 3298

King, Mr. Robert, 3296–3297, 3298–3299

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3295–3296, 3297, 3298, 3299

Head 65

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 3303

Bills (continued)

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27 (continued)

Ministry of Public Works and Environment

Head 65

Adams, Mr. Jache, 3303–3304

Campbell, Mr. Vance, 3304

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24

First Reading, 2901

Committee of Supply

Burt, Hon. E. David, 2968–2969

Ministry of National Security

Head 07-Bermuda Police Service

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2974, 2975

Head 07-Police

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2975

Head 12-Customs

Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 2975

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2974, 2975

Head 25-Corrections

Richardson, Hon. Jarion, 2975, 2976

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2975, 2976

Head 45-Fire Services

Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 2974, 2975

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2974

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2973

Ministry of Public Works and Environment

Head 36-Ministry Headquarters

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2969–2970, 2971

Burt, Hon. E. David, 2972, 2973

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2971

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2971, 2972, 2973

Head 81-Public Lands and Buildings

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2970

Head 82-Works and Engineering

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2970–2971

Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport

Head 65-Marine and Ports

Darrell, Hon. Owen, 2976

Report, 2977

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25

First Reading, 2902

Committee of Supply

Burt, Hon. E. David, 2977–2978

Ministry of Education

Head 17-Department of Education

Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 2978

Ministry of National Security

Head 06-Defence

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2980

Head 07-Bermuda Police Service

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2980–2981

Bills (continued)

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25 (continued)

Head 12-Customs

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2981

Head 25-Corrections

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2981

Head 45-Bermuda Fire Service

Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2981–2982

Ministry of Public Works and Environment

Head 36-Ministry Headquarters

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2979

Head 82-Works and Engineering

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2979–2980

Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3190

Second Reading

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3288–3289, 3290

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3289–3290

Committee, 3290–3291

Report, 3291

Third Reading, 3376

Trustee Amendment Act 2026

First Reading, 3268

Burt, Hon. E. David

Adjournment, motions thereon

Cup Match, 3393–3394

National Heroes Day, 3086

Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee: Compliance with Procurement

Rules, Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19

Travel Authorisation Procurement and Operation

Correction to, 3390–3391

PLP Government

Building a Fairer Bermuda, 3223–3229

Reply to OBA response, 3391–3393

not spending energy looking backwards, 3084–3086

Throne Speech agenda, 3151–3153

Azores, Official Visit to, 3221–3223

Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2025, 3089, 3090–3092

Bermuda's Fiscal Progress, independent rating agencies confirm, 2853–2855

Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda, 3210, 3211

Constitutional Reform, Consultation on proposed process for, 2852–2853

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2890–2891, 2961–2962, 3030, 3115

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3089, 3191–3197, 3205–3209

Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026, 3269–3270

Digital Finance Advancing in Bermuda, 2922–2924

Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3281–3282

International Cooperation (Tax Information Exchange Agreements) Common Reporting Standard Amendment Regulations 2026, 2851

Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3041

Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, 3119–3120, 3123–3127

Burt, Hon. E. David (continued)

PLP Government Building a Fairer Bermuda, 3223–3229
Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader
Personal Staffs Act 2019
Annual Report 2025/26, 2921
Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3356–3358
Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026, 2964–2966
Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026, 3037, 3039
Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27, 3155, 3294
Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24
Committee of Supply, 2968–2969
Ministry of Public Works and Environment
Head 36-Ministry Headquarters, 2972, 2973
Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25, 2977–2978
Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026, 3288–3289, 3290
Bus Pass quandary (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

C

Cambridge Checkpoint Report for Bermuda 2023-2025: Transparency, Accountability and Action (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Campbell, Mr. Vance

Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase, 3069
Premier's Question Period
Middle East or Africa contracts resulting in economic benefit to Bermuda, 3016, 3017
Question Period
Bermuda's Fiscal Progress, independent rating agencies confirm, 2876, 2877, 2879
CARICOM Membership, housing initiative benefits, analysis demonstrating, 3018
(answered in writing)
City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025, 2880
National Parks summer reminder on responsible use, 3110, 3111
Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27
Ministry of Public Works and Environment
Head 65, 3304

Canine Advisory Committee, release of recommendations (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Cannabis

Medical Cannabis Framework (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig

Adjournment, motions thereon
Allshores Tax Credit, 3140–3141, 3145
Bus Pass quandary, 3218–3219
Lamb Foggo Urgent Care Centre, 3141–3144
Lawlessness on our roads, 3217–3218
Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda, 3210–3211
Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase, 3070–3071
Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2886–2887, 2957
Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3324–3329
Electricity Amendment Act 2026, 3059–3061

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig (continued)

Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3280
Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3041
Premier's Question Period
 Grand Atlantic not affordable housing units, 3168, 3169, 3170
Question Period
 Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update, 3260, 3261, 3262
 Asphalt Patching Machine, 3246, 3247, 3248
 CARICOM Membership, tourism marketing initiatives, cultural exchange programmes or regional branding opportunities, analysis of, 3020 (answered in writing)
 City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025, 2879
 Fuel Security and National Energy Risk, 3021, 3022, 3023, 3024
 Labour Force Survey youth unemployment, 2867, 2868
 Medical Cannabis Framework, 2882, 2883
 Ridesharing in Bermuda, Implementation update, 3025, 3026, 3255
 Sugar Tax revenue to date by financial year since 2017, 2939
Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24
 Ministry of National Security
 Head 07-Police, 2975
 Ministry of Public Works and Environment
 Head 36-Ministry Headquarters, 2971
Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026, 3044
CARICOM Membership (See also Adjournment, motions thereon)
 corrections, rehabilitation, prison management, prison officer support programmes, measurable benefits for (See Question Period)
 crime reduction benefits, identify all policing initiatives and measurable (See Question Period)
 educational programme, analysis demonstrating qualification, partnership improvements (See Question Period)
 emigration, number of Bermudians emigrating to CARICOM member states (See Question Period)
 environmental programmes, assessment of benefit of (See Question Period)
 financial services/reputational risk assessments (See Question Period)
 food costs in Bermuda, detailed analysis demonstrating reduction in (See Question Period)
 housing initiative benefits, analysis demonstrating (See Question Period)
 immigration, ministerial meetings on (See Question Period)
 legal frameworks, dispute resolution mechanisms, judicial cooperation arrangement risks (See Question Period)
 opportunities and benefits for Bermuda (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
 small and medium-sized businesses, identify opportunities for (See Question Period)
 social programme expansion, analysis of (See Question Period)
 Story of Us: Public Consultation update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
 tourism marketing initiatives, cultural exchange programmes or regional branding opportunities, analysis of (See Question Period)
 travel impact on Bermuda (See Premier's Question Period)
 Work permits held by member nationals (See Question Period)
Centrally Managed Fund, projects to be identified and funded (See Premier's Question Period)
Child Day Care Allowance Amendment Regulations 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)
Child support, new electronic case management system (See Question Period)

City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025 (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
Civil Aviation (Air Transport Licensing) Regulations 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)
Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda (See Motions)
Community Beautification Programme: Building Better Communities one Project at a Time (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase (See Motions)

Confirmation of Minutes

27 March 2026, 2851
15 and 29 May 2026, 2999
12 and 26 June 2026, 3155
10 July 2026, 3221

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches

Adams, Hon. Jache, 3036
Burt, Hon. E. David, 2890–2891, 2961–2962, 3030, 3115
Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2886–2887, 2957
Darrell, Hon. Owen, 2889, 2957–2958, 3034–3035, 3187, 3264
DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2888–2889, 2958, 3031, 3113–3114, 3187–3188
DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S., 3031, 3112
Dill, Hon. Rev. Dr. Emilygail A., 2889–2890, 2962, 3114, 3266
Famous, Mr. Christopher, 2909, 2910–2911, 2985
Foggo, Ms. Lovitta F., 2962–2963, 3033–3034, 3111–3112, 3185
Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 2958–2959, 3031–3032, 3189
King, Mr. Robert, 2885
Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa, 2885–2886, 2961, 3114–3115, 3267
Lister, Mr. Dennis III, 2884, 2956–2957, 3032, 3112–3113, 3183–3184, 3263–3264
Ming, Mrs. Renee, 3033, 3188–3189
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 2885, 3036, 3267
Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S., 2885, 2962, 3034, 3186–3187, 3265–3266
Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 2884, 2956
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2961, 3184
Scott, Mr. W. Lawrence, 3266
Simmons, Mr. Jamahl S., 2959–2960
Simmons, Mr. Scott, 2890, 3267–3268
Smith, Hon. Ben, 2890, 3035, 3185–3186, 3264–3265
Smith, Ms. Linda, 2889, 3035
Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 2883, 2960–2961, 3033, 3145–3146, 3183, 3266–3267
The Speaker, 2891, 3115–3116, 3190, 3268
Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2888, 3113, 3189–3190
Tyrrell, Mr. Neville S., 2887–2888, 2960, 3035, 3114
Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 2886, 2959, 3035–3036, 3186
Constitutional Reform, Consultation on proposed process for (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026 (See Orders; Papers and Other Communications to House)
Cooperative Legislation in Bermuda, proposed introduction of (See Papers and Other Communications to House; Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)
Corrections Reform, accountability and action (See Premier's Question Period)

Cost of Living

(Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 (See Bills)

Culture

Bermudian culture (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

respect foundation of (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Cup Match (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Cyber Safety

Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness Courses (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Cyberattack on Government IT Systems in September 2023

Report of Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Cyber Attack on Government of Bermuda 2023 (See Reports of Committees)

D

Darrell, Hon. Owen

Adjournment, motions thereon

Road Traffic Accidents, 2904–2905

Bermuda Airport Authority Annual Report 2023/24, 2922

Bermuda Day 2026: Announcement of Grand Marshall, 2863–2864

Civil Aviation (Air Transport Licensing) Regulations 2026, 3156

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2889, 2957–2958, 3034–3035, 3187, 3264

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3312–3314

Emancipation Commemoration 2026, 3231–3233

Motor Car (Ridesharing) Regulations 2026, 2852

Motor Taxi (Taxi Despatching Service) Amendment Regulations 2026, 2852

Ridesharing in Bermuda, Implementation update, 2862–2863, 3005, 3233–3235

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24

Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport

Head 65-Marine and Ports, 2976

Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda)

Order 2020 Revocation Notice 2026, 3156

Order 2026, 2921, 3043–3044, 3047

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas

Adjournment, motions thereon

Allshores Tax Credit, 3135–3137

Insurance, regulating local insurance companies, 2996

Ministerial Code of Conduct, 3135

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019, outstanding reports, 2996–2998

Premier's reporting obligations to Parliament, 3077–3078

Warwick Workman's Club family fun day, 3077

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2888–2889, 2958, 3031, 3113–3114, 3187–3188

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3197–3199

Corporate Income Tax Amendment Act 2026, 3270

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas (continued)

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3317–3321
Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee: Compliance with Procurement Rules, Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel Authorisation, Procurement and Operation, 3245
Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, 3120, 3121–3122
Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3358–3360
Premier's Question Period
 Centrally Managed Fund, projects to be identified and funded, 3167, 3168
Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026, 2966
Question Period
 Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update, 3259, 3260
 Azores, Official Visit to, 3248, 3249, 3250
 Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update, 3101, 3102, 3103
 Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2025, 3099, 3100, 3101
 CARICOM
 financial services/reputational risk assessments, 3018 (answered in writing)
 Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2955
 Department of Planning, access to automated services, 3173
 Digital Finance Advancing in Bermuda, 2942, 2943, 2944, 2945
 Government Digital Asset Investment framework, 2939, 2940
 Labour Force Survey
 reasons underemployment rate increased, 2871, 2872
 unemployment and underemployment statistics, 2868, 2869, 2870, 2871
 youth unemployment, 2867
 Sugar Tax revenue to date by financial year since 2017, 2938, 2939
Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026, 3037–3038
Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24
 Ministry of Public Works and Environment
 Head 36-Ministry Headquarters, 2971, 2972, 2973
Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026, 3289–3290
Department of Child and Family Services, Building Capacity for Parenting (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
Department of Corrections Review Panel Report recommendations (See Question Period)
Department of Planning
 automated services, access to (See Question Period)
 commercial/business activities within residential zones, number of complains relating to (See Question Period)
Deputy Governors and Public Service Leadership Summit (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S.

Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update, 3092–3093
Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 3031, 3112
Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3203–3205
Government Housing Initiatives update, 2924–2927
Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026, 3352
Housing Programme Phase 2, updates, 3229–3230
Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3280–3281

DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S. (continued)

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election
Amendment Act 2026, 3370–3372

Digital Finance Advancing in Bermuda (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Dill, Rev. Dr. Emilygail A.

Adjournment, motions thereon

National Day of Prayer, 2917–2918

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2889–2890, 3266, 2962, 3114

Disability Inclusion, advancing of (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Division

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election
Amendment Act 2026, Second Reading, 3375

Domestic violence, malicious rumours of (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

E

Earth Stations Licensing, proposed regulatory framework (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Ebola Virus Precautionary Guidance (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Economic Diversification (See Premier's Question Period)

Education Authority Bill: Purpose, Progress and Principles (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Electoral Reform Working Group

establishment of (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

update (See Question Period)

Electricity

(Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution) Order 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

National Electricity Sector policy update on Consultative Draft (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Emancipation Commemoration 2026 (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Emergency Room chronic overcrowding (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

F**Fahy, Hon. Michael**

Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026, 3117

Electricity Amendment Act 2026, 3055–3057

Question Period

Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update, 3108, 3109, 3110

CARICOM Membership

emigration, number of Bermudians emigrating to CARICOM member states, 2940
(answered in writing)

immigration, ministerial meetings on, 2940 (answered in writing)

small and medium-sized businesses, identify opportunities for, 3020 (answered in writing)

Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2953

work permits held by member nationals, 2940 (Disallowed)

Fahy, Hon. Michael (continued)

Question Period (continued)

Government Housing Initiatives update, 2947, 2948

Registry General Annual Report 2025, 2949

Family Preservation Tier II Programme, progress update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Famous, Mr. Christopher

Adjournment, motions thereon

Affordable Housing Initiative, 2911

Backbenchers' role in supporting Government Ministers, 3075

CARICOM Membership, 2911–2912

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2909, 2910–2911, 2985

Cup Match, 3380

Government Housing Initiative update, 2985–2987

Lamb Foggo Urgent Care Centre, 3137–3140

Senhor Santo Cristo Festival, 2910

Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase, 3072

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, Famous, 2909, 2910–2911, 2985

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3364–3366

Financial

Assistance Programme, Administration and Oversight of Grocery Partnerships (See Question Period)

Strategic Investment, strengthening Government through (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Foggo, Ms. Lovitta F.

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2962–2963, 3033–3034, 3111–3112, 3185

Fuel Security and National Energy Risk (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Furbert, Hon. Tinee

Adjournment, motions thereon

Autism, challenges facing families and Government support initiatives, 3075–3076

Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, 3212

CARICOM Membership opportunities and benefits for Bermuda, 3076–3077

Deputy Governors and Public Service Leadership Summit, 3076

Senior Abuse, 3212–3213

Autism Spectrum Disorder Out of School programmes, 3095–3096

Child Day Care Allowance Amendment Regulations 2026, 3090

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2958–2959, 3031–3032, 3189

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3205

Department of Child and Family Services, Building Capacity for Parenting, 3005–3006

Disability Inclusion, advancing of, 2929–2930

Family Preservation Tier II Programme, progress update, 3156–3157

Hearing Support Pilot Programme, 2928–2929

Human Rights

Amendment Act 2026, 3272–3274, 3282–3283

Commission 2025 Annual Report, 3155, 3157–3158

Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness Courses, 3230–3231

Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, 3122–3123

G

Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, maintenance and upkeep update (See Question Period)

Google's subsea cables

in Bermuda (See Premier's Question Period)

Nuven and Sol, update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Government

Digital Asset Investment framework (See Question Period)

Housing Initiative update (See Adjournment, motions thereon; Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Government's new Portal, launch of (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Grand Atlantic not affordable housing units (See Premier's Question Period)

Greenland Farm, enforcement actions concerning environmental nuisances (See Question Period)

Grow Local (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

H

Hamilton

City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025 (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Hayward, Hon. Jason

Adjournment, motions thereon

Bermuda Day, 2918–2919

Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026, 3116–3117

Cooperative Legislation in Bermuda, proposed introduction of, 3000, 3008

Electricity

(Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution) Order 2026, 3221

Amendment Act 2026, 3052–3055

Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3278

Registry General Annual Report 2025, 2922, 2927–2928

Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026, 3038

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27

Ministry of Justice

Head 25-Corrections, 3298

Youth Employment and Bermuda Job Connect: Advancing Bermuda's Workforce, 3159–3161

Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Hearing Support Pilot Programme (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, first reigning king to visit Bermuda (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

HIV Awareness Month (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Holiday weekend safety reminders (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Homelessness

Ending Homelessness Together, Plan to End Homelessness (See Motions)

Hospital, systemic failures leading to serious harm or death (See Premier's Question Period)

Housing

Affordable Housing, Government's commitment to provide (See Premier's Question Period)

Bermudian household purchasing power (See Premier's Question Period)

Ending Homelessness Together, Plan to End Homelessness (See Motions)

Housing (continued)

- Government Housing Initiatives update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Grand Atlantic not affordable housing units (See Premier's Question Period)
- Housing Crisis Initiatives update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Housing Programme Phase 2, updates (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Landlord and Tenant Act
 - draft Bill update 2025 (See Question Period)
 - Reform and the National Housing Registry Framework update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

HSBC ATM Banking (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Human Rights

- Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)
- Commission 2025 Annual Report (See Papers and Other Communications to House; Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Hurricane Preparedness for 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

I

Immigration

- Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)
- Insurance, regulating local insurance companies (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
- Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

International

- Cooperation (Tax Information Exchange Agreements) Common Reporting Standard Amendment Regulations 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)
- Travel Restrictions, Implications on Access to Overseas Medical Care (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

J

Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026 (See Bills)

K

King, Mr. Robert

- Adjournment, motions thereon
- Road Traffic Accidents, 2908–2909
- Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase, 3070
- Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2885
- Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3316
- Premier's Question Period
 - Corrections Reform, accountability and action, 3015
- Question Period
 - Azores, Official Visit to, 3251, 3252
 - Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update, 3104, 3105, 3106, 3107
 - CARICOM Membership, corrections, rehabilitation, prison management, prison officer support programmes, measurable benefits for, 3019 (answered in writing)
 - Constitutional Reform, Consultation on proposed process for, 2875, 2876
 - Department of Child and Family Services, Building Capacity for Parenting, 3026, 3027

King, Mr. Robert (continued)

Question Period (continued)

Department of Corrections Review Panel Report recommendations, 3176, 3177, 3178
Family Preservation Tier II Programme, progress update, 3179, 3180, 3181
Fuel Security and National Energy Risk, 3024
Greenland Farm, enforcement actions concerning environmental nuisances, 2941, 2942
Hearing Support Pilot Programme, 2951
Human Rights Commission 2025 Annual Report, 3181, 3182
PLP Government Building a Fairer Bermuda, 3253, 3254
Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27
Ministry of Justice, Head 25-Corrections, 3296–3297, 3298–3299
Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026, 3045

L

Labour Force Survey

reasons underemployment rate increased (See Question Period)
unemployment and underemployment statistics (See Question Period)
youth unemployment (See Question Period)

Lamb Foggo Urgent Care Centre (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Landlord and Tenant Act

draft Bill update 2025 (See Question Period)
Reform and the National Housing Registry Framework update (See Statements by
Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Lightbourne, Hon. Alexa

Adjournment, motions thereon

CARICOM Membership, 3081–3083
Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update, 3241–3243
CARICOM Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2931–2932
Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2885–2886, 2961, 3114–3115, 3267

Cost of Living

(Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026, 3000
Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3306–3310, 3331–3333
Earth Stations Licensing, proposed regulatory framework, 3097–3099
Electricity Amendment Act 2026, 3048–3050, 3061–3063
Fuel Security and National Energy Risk, 3002–3003
Google's Subsea Cable Landings: Nuvem and Sol, update, 3003–3004
Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3279–3280
Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy,
3243–3245
Landlord and Tenant Act Reform and the National Housing Registry Framework update,
2859–2861
National Electricity Sector policy, update on Consultative Draft, 2857–2859
Regulatory Authority of Bermuda Annual Report 2020-2021, 2999
Rental Scams, online, protection of consumers, 3001–3002
Single-Use Plastics Act 2026, 2897
Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, reconstitution of, 2933–2935
Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27
Ministry of Digital Innovation
Head 66-Department of Information and Digital Technologies, 3305–3306

Lister, Mr. Dennis III

Adjournment, motions thereon

Cup Match, 3380, 3381

HSBC ATM Banking, 3213–3214

Youth, instilling right morals, ethics and principles in our youth begins at home, 3214–3216

Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026, 3117

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2884, 2956–2957, 3032, 3112–3113, 3183–3184, 3263–3264

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3314–3316

Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026, 3340–3342, 3348

Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026, 3038–3039

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27

Ministry of Justice

Head 25-Corrections, 3295–3296, 3297, 3298, 3299

Head 65, 3303

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25

Ministry of Education

Head 17-Department of Education, 2978

M

Marine pollution complaints (See Question Period)

Medical Cannabis Framework (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month, Ending the Silence, reflection on (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Middle East or Africa contracts resulting in economic benefit to Bermuda (See Premier's Question Period)

Ming, Mrs. Renee

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 3033, 3188–3189

Ministerial Code of Conduct (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Ministry of Education

staff, oversight and performance of management (See Question Period)

succession planning (See Question Period)

Moment of Silence

Swan, Sir John, KBE, JP, 2999

Motions

Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda, 2892 (notice of motion)

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3210, 3211

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3210–3211

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3211

Speaker's Rulings (Sub judice matters), 3211–3212, 3378–3379

Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase

Adams, Hon. Jache, 2964 (Notice of), 3067–3069, 3072–3073

Campbell, Mr. Vance, 3069

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3070–3071

Famous, Mr. Christopher, 3072

King, Mr. Robert, 3070

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3071–3072

Motions (continued)

Homelessness

Ending Homelessness Together, Plan to End Homelessness, 3191 (Notice of Motion)

Motor Car

(Ridesharing) Regulations 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)
and Auxiliary Bicycles (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Motor Taxi (Taxi Despatching Service) Amendment Regulations 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

N

National

Day of Prayer (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Electricity Sector policy update on Consultative Draft (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Heroes Day (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Infrastructure and Community Works across Island, update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Parks summer reminder on responsible use (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

O

Ombudsman Annual Report 2025 (See Announcements by the Speaker or Member presiding)

Orders

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026

Adams, Hon. Jache, 3202–3203

Burt, Hon. E. David, 3191–3197, 3205–3209

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3197–3199

DeSilva, Hon. Zane J. S., 3203–3205

Furbert, Hon. Tinee, 3205

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3201–3202

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3199–3201

Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3044

Darrell, Hon. Owen, 3043–3044, 3047

King, Mr. Robert, 3045

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3045–3047

P

Papers and Other Communications to House

Bermuda Airport Authority Annual Report 2023/24, 2922

Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2025, 3089

Bermuda's Employment and Labour Relations Tribunal Report: Strengthening Enforcement Powers, 3090

Child Day Care Allowance Amendment Regulations 2026, 3090

Civil Aviation (Air Transport Licensing) Regulations 2026, 3156

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3089

Cooperative Legislation in Bermuda, proposed introduction of, 3000

Papers and Other Communications to House (continued)

- Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026, 3000
- Electricity (Integrated Resource Planning Process Suspension and Reconstitution) Order 2026, 3221
- Human Rights Commission 2025 Annual Report, 3155
- International Cooperation (Tax Information Exchange Agreements) Common Reporting Standard Amendment Regulations 2026, 2851
- Motor Car (Ridesharing) Regulations 2026, 2852
- Motor Taxi (Taxi Despatching Service) Amendment Regulations 2026, 2852
- Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019
Annual Report 2025/26, 2921
- Privacy Commissioner Pre-Implementation Annual Report 2025-2026, 3089
- Registry General Annual Report 2025, 2922
- Regulatory Authority of Bermuda Annual Report 2020-2021, 2999
- Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27, 3155
- Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda)
Order 2020 Revocation Notice 2026, 3156
Order 2026, 2921
- Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness Courses (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Parliamentary
debate, elevating of (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
Questions (See Question Period)
Report of Joint Select Committee on Cyber Attack on Government of Bermuda 2023 (See Reports of Committees)
Report of Standing Public Accounts Committee: Compliance with Procurement Rules, Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel Authorisation, Procurement and Operation (See Reports of Committees)
- Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026 (See Bills)
- Pearman, Mr. Scott**
Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026, 3292
Commission of Inquiry into Historic Land Loss in Bermuda, 3211
Compass Point Building Approval to Purchase, 3071–3072
Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2885, 3036, 3267
Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3329
Electricity Amendment Act 2026, 3057–3059
Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026, 3352
Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3275–3278, 3283
Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026, 3342–3344
Question Period
CARICOM Membership, legal frameworks, dispute resolution mechanisms, judicial cooperation arrangement risks, 3019 (answered in writing)
Ebola Virus Precautionary Guidance, 3027, 3028, 3029
HIV Awareness Month, 3029, 3030
International Travel Restrictions, Implications on Access to Overseas Medical Care, 3183
Single-Use Plastics Act 2026, 2895–2896
Penhurst Park horticulture removal (See Question Period)
Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

PLP Government

Building a Fairer Bermuda (See Adjournment, motions thereon; Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Reply to OBA response (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

not spending energy looking backwards (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Throne Speech agenda (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Political accountability (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Population requirement for Bermuda's sustainability (See Premier's Question Period)

Port Royal Primary School disciplinary matter (See Question Period)

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs

Act 2019

Annual Report 2025/26 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

outstanding reports (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Premier's leadership and Government's fiscal record (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Premier's Question Period

Affordable Housing, Government's commitment to provide

Weeks, Mr. Michael A., 3164, 3165, 3166

Artificial Intelligence, impact on Bermudian workforce

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3012, 3013

Bermudian household purchasing power

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3162, 3163

CARICOM Membership, travel impact on Bermuda

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3010, 3011

Centrally Managed Fund, projects to be identified and funded

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3167, 3168

Corrections Reform, accountability and action

King, Mr. Robert, 3015

Economic Diversification

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3162

Google's subsea cables in Bermuda

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 3013, 3014

Grand Atlantic not affordable housing units

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3168, 3169, 3170

Hospital, systemic failures leading to serious harm or death

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3011, 3012

Middle East or Africa contracts resulting in economic benefit to Bermuda

Campbell, Mr. Vance, 3016, 3017

Population requirement for Bermuda's sustainability

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3161

Premier's reporting obligations to Parliament (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 outstanding reports
(See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Premiums, rising cost of (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Privacy Commissioner Pre-Implementation Annual Report 2025-2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

Procurement Rules

Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee: Compliance with Procurement Rules,
Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel
Authorisation, Procurement and Operation (See Reports of Committees)

Q

Question Period

Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3260, 3261, 3262

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3259, 3260

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3259

Asphalt Patching Machine

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3246, 3247, 3248

Azores, Official Visit to

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3248, 3249, 3250

King, Mr. Robert, 3251, 3252

Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3101, 3102, 3103

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 3108, 3109, 3110

King, Mr. Robert, 3104, 3105, 3106, 3107

Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2025

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3099, 3100, 3101

Bermuda's Fiscal Progress, independent rating agencies confirm

Campbell, Mr. Vance, 2876, 2877, 2879

CARICOM Membership

corrections, rehabilitation, prison management, prison officer support programmes,
measurable benefits for

King, Mr. Robert, 3019 (answered in writing)

educational programme, qualification, partnership improvements, analysis demonstrating

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3019 (answered in writing)

emigration, number of Bermudians emigrating to CARICOM member states

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 2940 (answered in writing)

environmental programmes assessment of benefit of

Smith, Ms. Linda, 3021 (answered in writing)

financial services/reputational risk assessments

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3018 (answered in writing)

food costs in Bermuda detailed analysis demonstrating reduction in

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3019 (answered in writing)

housing initiative benefits, analysis demonstrating

Campbell, Mr. Vance, 3018 (answered in writing)

Immigration, ministerial meetings on

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 2940 (answered in writing)

legal frameworks, dispute resolution mechanisms, judicial cooperation arrangement risks

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3019 (answered in writing)

policing initiatives and measurable crime reduction benefits, identify all

Richardson, Mr. Jarion, 3020 (answered in writing)

small and medium-sized businesses identify opportunities for

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 3020 (answered in writing)

social programme expansion, analysis of

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3020 (answered in writing)

Question Period (continued)

CARICOM Membership (continued)

Story of Us: Public Consultation update

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2955

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 2953

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2952, 2953, 2954, 2955

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E., 2954

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2954

tourism marketing initiatives, cultural exchange programmes or regional branding

opportunities analysis of

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3020 (answered in writing)

work permits held by member nationals

Fahy, Hon. Michael, 2940 (Disallowed)

Child support, new electronic case management system

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3171 (answered in writing)

City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025

Campbell, Mr. Vance, 2880

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2879

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2879, 2880

Constitutional Reform, Consultation on proposed process for

King, Mr. Robert, 2875, 2876

Department of Child and Family Services, Building Capacity for Parenting

King, Mr. Robert, 3026, 3027

Department of Corrections Review Panel Report recommendations

King, Mr. Robert, 3176, 3177, 3178

Department of Planning

automated services, access to

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 3173

Smith, Ms. Linda, 3172, 3173

commercial/business activities within residential zones, number of complains relating to

Smith, Ms. Linda, 3173, 3174

Digital Finance Advancing in Bermuda

DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2942, 2943, 2944, 2945

Ebola Virus Precautionary Guidance

Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3027, 3028, 3029

Education Authority Bill: Purpose, Progress and Principles

Smith, Hon. Ben, 3256, 3257

Electoral Reform Working Group

establishment of

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3258

update

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2872, 2873

Family Preservation Tier II Programme, progress update

King, Mr. Robert, 3179, 3180, 3181

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 3178, 3179

Financial Assistance Programme, Administration and Oversight of Grocery Partnerships

Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2866

Fuel Security and National Energy Risk

Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3021, 3022, 3023, 3024

King, Mr. Robert, 3024

Smith, Ms. Linda, 3021

Question Period (continued)

Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, maintenance and upkeep update
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2874

Government Digital Asset Investment framework
DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2939, 2940

Government Housing Initiatives update
Fahy, Hon. Michael, 2947, 2948
Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2945, 2946, 2947

Government's new Portal, launch of
Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2880, 2881

Greenland Farm, enforcement actions concerning environmental nuisances
King, Mr. Robert, 2941, 2942

Hearing Support Pilot Programme
King, Mr. Robert, 2951
Tucker, Ms. Robin, 2950

HIV Awareness Month
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3029, 3030

Human Rights Commission 2025 Annual Report
King, Mr. Robert, 3181, 3182

Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 3262
Smith, Ms. Linda, 3262

International Travel Restrictions, Implications on Access to Overseas Medical Care
Pearman, Mr. Scott, 3183

Labour Force Survey
reasons underemployment rate increased
DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2871, 2872
unemployment and underemployment statistics
DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2868, 2869, 2870, 2871
youth unemployment
Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2867, 2868
DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2867

Landlord and Tenant Act 2025, draft Bill update
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2873

Marine pollution complaints
Smith, Ms. Linda, 2875

Medical Cannabis Framework
Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2882, 2883

Ministry of Education
staff oversight and performance of management
Smith, Hon. Ben, 2866
succession planning
Smith, Hon. Ben, 3018 (answered in writing)

National Electricity Sector policy update on Consultative Draft
Robinson, Mr. Dwayne, 2881, 2882

National Parks summer reminder on responsible use
Campbell, Mr. Vance, 3110, 3111

Penhurst Park horticulture removal
Smith, Ms. Linda, 2874, 2875

PLP Government Building a Fairer Bermuda
King, Mr. Robert, 3253, 3254

Question Period (continued)

Port Royal Primary School disciplinary matter
Smith, Hon. Ben, 2940 (answered in writing)
Registry General Annual Report 2025
Fahy, Hon. Michael, 2949
Ridesharing in Bermuda, Implementation update
Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 3025, 3026, 3255
Senior high schools, number of students graduating from
Smith, Hon. Ben, 3171 (answered in writing), 3249 (answered in writing)
Southlands Park, status of plans for zip line facility
Smith, Ms. Linda, 3175
Student Code of Conduct, disciplinary framework, public school classroom enrolment stats
Smith, Hon. Ben, 3099 (answered in writing)
Sugar Tax revenue to date by financial year since 2017
Cannonier, Mr. L. Craig, 2939
DeCouto, Dr. Douglas, 2938, 2939

R

Rabain, Hon. Diallo V. S.

Adjournment, motions thereon
Bus Pass quandary, 3219–3220
Road Traffic Accidents, 3133–3134
Signature School Graduation Diploma, 3134
Cambridge Checkpoint Report for Bermuda 2023-2025: Transparency, Accountability and Action, 3236–3238
City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025, 2855–2856
Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2885, 2962, 3034, 3186–3187, 3265–3266
Education Authority Bill: Purpose, Progress and Principles, 3238–3240
Electoral Reform Working Group, establishment of, 3006–3007
Government's new Portal, launch of, 2856–2857
Grow Local, 2935–2936
Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3360–3363
Privacy Commissioner Pre-Implementation Annual Report 2025-2026, 3089
Single-Use Plastics Act 2026, 2896
Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27
Committee of Supply
Ministry of Education
Head 41-Bermuda College, 3299–3300, 3301–3302, 3303
Registry General Annual Report 2025 (See Papers and Other Communications to House; Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
Regulatory Authority of Bermuda Annual Report 2020-2021 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)
Rental Scams, online, protection of consumers (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Regulations

Child Day Care Allowance Amendment Regulations 2026, 3090
Civil Aviation (Air Transport Licensing) Regulations 2026, 3156
Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026, 3000

Regulations (continued)

- International Cooperation (Tax Information Exchange Agreements) Common Reporting Standard Amendment Regulations 2026, 2851
- Motor Car (Ridesharing) Regulations 2026, 2852
- Motor Taxi (Taxi Despatching Service) Amendment Regulations 2026, 2852

Reports of Committees

- Cyberattack on Government IT Systems in September 2023
 - Report of Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Cyber Attack on Government of Bermuda 2023, 3245
- Procurement Rules
 - Report of Parliamentary Standing Public Accounts Committee: Compliance with Procurement Rules, Financial Instructions, Governance and Value for Money of COVID-19 Travel Authorisation, Procurement and Operation, 3245 (See also Adjournment, motions thereon)
- Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Richardson, Mr. Jarion

- Adjournment, motions thereon
 - Road Traffic Accidents, 2902–2904, 2983–2985, 3130–3133
 - Youth, instilling right morals, ethics and principles in our youth begins at home, 3216
- Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2884, 2956
- Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026, 3346–3348
- Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3353–3356, 3372–3374
- Question Period
 - CARICOM Membership, policing initiatives and measurable crime reduction benefits, identify all, 3020 (answered in writing)
- Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24
 - Ministry of National Security
 - Head 12-Customs Services, 2975
 - Head 25-Corrections, 2975, 2976
 - Head 45-Fire Services, 2974, 2975
- Ridesharing in Bermuda, Implementation and progress update (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)
- Road Traffic Accidents (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
 - Lawlessness on our roads (See Adjournment, motions thereon)
- Road Traffic and Motor Car (Road Safety and Penalties) Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne

- Adjournment, motions thereon
 - Teachers, support for, 2988–2990
- Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2961, 3184
- Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3201–3202
- Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3310–3312
- Electricity Amendment Act 2026, 3050–3051
- Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3366–3368
- Question Period
 - Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update, 3259

Robinson, Mr. Dwayne (continued)

Question Period (continued)

CARICOM Membership

food costs in Bermuda, detailed analysis demonstrating reduction in, 3019 (answered in writing)

Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2952, 2953, 2954, 2955

Electoral Reform Working Group

establishment of, 3258

update, 2872, 2873

Gibbs Hill Lighthouse, maintenance and upkeep update, 2874

Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy, 3262

Landlord and Tenant Act 2025, draft Bill update, 2873

National Electricity Sector policy update on Consultative Draft, 2881, 2882

Royal Visit Invitation not received by MP (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

S**Scott, Mr. W. Lawrence**

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 3266

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3321–3324

Report of Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Cyber Attack on Government of Bermuda 2023, 3245

Senhor Santo Cristo Festival (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Senior

abuse (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

high schools, number of students graduating from (See Question Period)

Signature School Graduation Diploma (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Simmons, Mr. Jamahl S.

Adjournment, motions thereon

Parliamentary debate, elevating of, 2990–2991

Teachers, support for, 2990

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2959–2960

Simmons, Mr. Scott

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2890, 3267–3268

Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 (See Bills)

Smith, Hon. Ben

Adjournment, motions thereon

Bermuda Day, 2917

Health Insurance Premiums, rising cost of, 3150–3151

Holiday weekend safety reminders, 3083–3084

PLP Government Building a Fairer Bermuda

OBA response, 3381–3384

Road Traffic Accidents, 2916–2917

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2890, 3035, 3185–3186, 3264–3265

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3330–3331

Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3278–3279

Premier's Question Period

Artificial Intelligence, impact on Bermudian workforce, 3012, 3013

Bermudian household purchasing power, 3162, 3163

CARICOM Membership, travel impact on Bermuda, 3010, 3011

Economic Diversification, 3162

Smith, Hon. Ben (continued)

Hospital, systemic failures leading to serious harm or death, 3011, 3012

Population requirement for Bermuda's sustainability, 3161

Question Period

CARICOM Membership, educational programme, qualification, partnership improvements, analysis demonstrating, 3019 (answered in writing)

Education Authority Bill: Purpose, Progress and Principles, 3256, 3257

Ministry of Education

staff oversight and performance of management, 2866

succession planning, 3018 (answered in writing)

Port Royal Primary School disciplinary matter, 2940 (answered in writing)

Senior high schools, number of students graduating from, 3171 (answered in writing), 3249 (answered in writing)

Student Code of Conduct, disciplinary framework, public school classroom enrolment stats, 3099 (answered in writing)

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27**Ministry of Education**

Head 41-Bermuda College, 3300–3301, 3302

Smith, Ms. Linda**Adjournment, motions thereon**

Canine Advisory Committee, release of recommendations, 2987–2988

Road Traffic Accidents, 2905–2906

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2889, 3035

Cost of Living Commission Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, 3314

Electricity Amendment Act 2026, 3051–3052

Question Period

CARICOM Membership, environmental programmes, assessment of benefit of, 3021 (answered in writing)

Department of Planning

automated services, access to, 3172, 3173

commercial/business activities within residential zones, number of complains relating to, 3173, 3174

Fuel Security and National Energy Risk, 3021

Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy, 3262

Marine pollution complaints, 2875

Penhurst Park horticulture removal, 2874, 2875

Southlands Park, status of plans for zip line facility, 3175

Single-Use Plastics Act 2026, 2894

Southampton Princess Hotel (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Southlands Park, status of plans for zip line facility (See Question Period)

Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, reconstitution of (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Speaker's Rulings (See Announcements by the Speaker or Member presiding)

Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers

Affordable Bermuda Agenda and Affordable Bermuda Basket, update, 3241–3243 (See *also* Question Period)

Airport Rescue and Firefighting, commissioning of new vehicles, 2930–2931

Autism Spectrum Disorder Out of School programmes, 3095–3096

Azores, Official Visit to, 3221–3223 (See *also* Question Period)

Bermuda Affordable Housing First Phase, update, 3092–3093 (See *also* Question Period)

Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers (continued)

Bermuda Day 2026: Announcement of Grand Marshall, 2863–2864
Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2025, 3090–3092 (*See also* Question Period)
Bermuda's Employment and Labour Relations Tribunal Report: Strengthening Enforcement Powers, 3094–3095
Bermuda's Fiscal Progress, independent rating agencies confirm, 2853–2855 (*See also* Question Period)
Cambridge Checkpoint Report for Bermuda 2023-2025: Transparency, Accountability and Action, 3236–3238
CARICOM, Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2931–2932 (*See also* Question Period)
City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025, 2855–2856 (*See also* Question Period)
Community Beautification Programme: Building Better Communities one Project at a Time, 3235–3236
Constitutional Reform, Consultation on proposed process for, 2852–2853 (*See also* Question Period)
Cooperative Legislation in Bermuda, proposed introduction of, 3008
Department of Child and Family Services, Building Capacity for Parenting, 3005–3006 (*See also* Question Period)
Digital Finance Advancing in Bermuda, 2922–2924 (*See also* Question Period)
Disability Inclusion, advancing of, 2929–2930
Earth Stations Licensing, proposed regulatory framework, 3097–3099
Ebola Virus Precautionary Guidance, 3008–3009 (*See also* Question Period)
Education Authority Bill: Purpose, Progress and Principles, 3238–3240 (*See also* Question Period)
Electoral Reform Working Group, establishment of, 3006–3007 (*See also* Question Period)
Emancipation Commemoration 2026, 3231–3233
Family Preservation Tier II Programme, progress update, 3156–3157 (*See also* Question Period)
Fuel Security and National Energy Risk, 3002–3003 (*See also* Question Period)
Google's Subsea Cable Landings: Nuvem and Sol, update, 3003–3004
Government's new Portal, launch of, 2856–2857 (*See also* Question Period)
Grow Local, 2935–2936
Hearing Support Pilot Programme, 2928–2929 (*See also* Question Period)
HIV Awareness Month, 3009–3010 (*See also* Question Period)
Housing
 Crisis Initiatives update, 2924–2927
 Government Housing Initiatives update, 2924–2927 (*See also* Question Period)
 Programme Phase 2, updates, 3229–3230
Human Rights Commission 2025 Annual Report, 3157–3158 (*See also* Question Period)
Hurricane Preparedness for 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season
 Weeks, Hon. Michael A., 3000–3001
Integrated Resource Plan Pause and Alignment with National Electricity Sector Policy, 3243–3245 (*See also* Question Period)
International Travel Restrictions, Implications on Access to Overseas Medical Care, 3158–3159 (*See also* Question Period)
Landlord and Tenant Act Reform and the National Housing Registry Framework update, 2859–2861
Medical Cannabis Framework, 2861–2862 (*See also* Question Period)
Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month, Ending the Silence, reflection on, 2937–2938

Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers (continued)

National

Electricity Sector policy update on Consultative Draft, 2857–2859 (*See also* Question Period)

Infrastructure and Community Works across Island, update, 2864–2866

Parks summer reminder on responsible use, 3096–3097 (*See also* Question Period)

Parent Cyber Safety and Digital Wellness Courses, 3230–3231

PLP Government Building a Fairer Bermuda, 3223–3229 (*See also* Question Period)

Registry General Annual Report 2025, 2927–2928 (*See also* Question Period)

Rental Scams, online, protection of consumers, 3001–3002

Ridesharing

in Bermuda, Implementation update, 2862–2863, 3005 (*See also* Question Period)

Programme progress report on implementation, 3233–3235 (*See also* Question Period)

Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, reconstitution of, 2933–2935

Strategic Investment, strengthening Government through, 2936–2937

Youth Employment and Bermuda Job Connect: Advancing Bermuda's Workforce, 3159–3161

Stop Lists

International Travel Restrictions, Implications on Access to Overseas Medical Care (*See* Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Strategic Investment, strengthening Government through (*See* Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

Student Code of Conduct, disciplinary framework, public school classroom enrolment stats (*See* Question Period)

Sugar Tax revenue to date by financial year since 2017 (*See* Question Period)

Supplementary Estimate (No. 1) 2026/27 (*See* Bills; Papers and Other Communications to House); (No. 2) 2023/24 (*See* Bills); (No. 2) 2024/25 (*See* Bills)

Swan, Mr. Hubert (Kim) E.

Adjournment, motions thereon

Bermuda Day, 2993–2996

Culture, Bermudian culture, 3146–3148

Premier's leadership and Government's fiscal record, 3078–3081

Royal Visit Invitation not received by MP, 2912–2913

Southampton Princess Hotel, 2913–2915

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2883, 2960–2961, 3033, 3145–3146, 3183, 3266–3267

Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2026, 3199–3201

Pension (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, 3122

Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026, 3363–3364

Premier's Question Period

Google's subsea cables in Bermuda, 3013, 3014

Question Period

CARICOM, Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2954

Single-Use Plastics Act 2026, 2894–2895

Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda) Order 2026, 3045–3047

Swan, Sir John, KBE, JP

Moment of Silence (*See* Announcements by the Speaker or Member presiding)

Special joint parliamentary session to honour (*See* Announcements by the Speaker or Member presiding)

T

Tax Credits Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Teachers, support for (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Tourism Investment (Rosewood Bermuda)

Order 2020 Revocation Notice 2026 (See Orders; Papers and Other Communications to House)

Order 2026 (See Papers and Other Communications to House)

Trustee Amendment Act 2026 (See Bills)

Tucker, Ms. Robin

Adjournment, motions thereon

Culture, respect foundation of, 2991–2993

Emergency Room chronic overcrowding, 3148–3149

Political accountability, 3149–3150

Senior Abuse, 3216–3217

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2888, 3113, 3189–3190

Human Rights Amendment Act 2026, 3274–3275

Question Period

CARICOM Membership

social programme expansion, analysis of, 3020 (answered in writing)

Story of Us: Public Consultation update, 2954

Child support, new electronic case management system, 3171 (answered in writing)

City of Hamilton Ground Floor Use and Vacancy Survey 2025, 2879, 2880

Family Preservation Tier II Programme, progress update, 3178, 3179

Financial Assistance Programme, Administration and Oversight of Grocery Partnerships, 2866

Government Housing Initiatives update, 2945, 2946, 2947

Government's new Portal, launch of, 2880, 2881

Hearing Support Pilot Programme, 2950

Tyrrell, Mr. Neville S.

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2887–2888, 2960, 3035, 3114

W

Warwick Workman's Club family fun day (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Weeks, Hon. Michael A.

Adjournment, motions thereon

Bermuda Day, 2916

His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, first reigning king to visit Bermuda, 2915

Road Traffic Accidents, 2915–2916

Airport Rescue and Firefighting, commissioning of new vehicles, 2930–2931

Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, 2886, 2959, 3035–3036

Hurricane Preparedness for 2026 Atlantic Hurricane Season, 3000–3001

Medical Cannabis Framework, 2861–2862

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24

Ministry of National Security, 2973

Head 07-Bermuda Police Service, 2974, 2975

Head 12-Customs, 2974, 2975

Head 25-Corrections, 2975, 2976

Head 45-Fire Services, 2974

Weeks, Hon. Michael A. (continued)

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25

Ministry of National Security

Head 06-Defence, 2980

Head 07-Bermuda Police Service, 2980–2981

Head 12-Customs, 2981

Head 25-Corrections, 2981

Head 45-Bermuda Fire Service, 2981–2982

Weeks, Mr. Michael A.

Justice and Community Safety Reform Act 2026, 3344–3346

Premier's Question Period

Affordable Housing, Government's commitment to provide, 3164, 3165, 3166

Wilson, Hon. Kim N.

Adjournment, motions thereon

Health Insurance Premiums, rising cost of, 3144–3145

Bermuda Health Council (Miscellaneous Amendments) Act 2026, 3291–3292

Ebola Virus Precautionary Guidance, 3008–3009

Health Insurance Amendment Act 2026, 3351–3352

HIV Awareness Month, 3009–3010

International Travel Restrictions, Implications on Access to Overseas Medical Care, 3158–3159

Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month, Ending the Silence, reflection on, 2937–2938

Y**Youth**

Employment and Bermuda Job Connect: Advancing Bermuda's Workforce (See Statements by Ministers and Junior Ministers)

instilling right morals, ethics and principles in our youth begins at home (See Adjournment, motions thereon)

Sittings 35 – 40**pages in Hansard**

15 May 2026 2851–2920

29 May 2026 2921–2998

12 June 2026 2999–3088

26 June 2026 3089–3154

10 July 2026 3155–3220

17 July 2026 3221–3396