



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

By

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Minister of Home Affairs

Update on the Affordable Bermuda Agenda and the Affordable Bermuda Basket

Friday, July 17th 2026

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 through it the people of Bermuda, with an update on the Government's Affordable Bermuda Agenda, and on the progress and record of the Affordable Bermuda Basket, which concludes its nine month term on July 31st. This is the final opportunity to report to this Honourable House before the summer adjournment.

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 lead the Government's affordability portfolio and coordinate efforts to address Bermuda's cost of living. Affordability was and remains one of the defining challenges facing Bermuda

households, and the response had to be coordinated and grounded in evidence.

The Ministry began by listening. We commissioned island-wide surveys and focus groups, and received responses from a sample of our community, including small and medium-sized enterprises.

We learned that seven in ten households reported moderate to extreme financial hardship, and named housing, groceries and healthcare as their heaviest pressures. On June 25th 2025, we gathered representatives from across Bermuda at Bermuda's first-ever Cost of Living Summit, with the discussions and findings setting the roadmap for a way forward.

In October we published what we heard and what we would do, focused on a deliberate first set of the recommendations, careful neither to overcommit nor to underdeliver. 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, nor did it assign all aspects of cost and the impact it had on families to the remit of the Ministry of Home Affairs alone. It was a whole of country invitation and roadmap. Those who were ready joined at the start. Others joined along the journey.

No government, no ministry, no sector should hold the sole responsibility of addressing cost. It requires, and has always required, a whole of Bermuda approach underpinned by good oversight and regulation.

The Agenda, as an extension of the Cost-of-Living Summit, named five pillars that reflected the areas most responsible for the strain on household budgets; Imports; Food Security and Affordability; Utilities; Housing; and Consumer Protection and Education. These pillars acknowledge that no single policy, initiative or ministry can solve the whole of Bermuda cost-of-living challenge.

We know now, and we knew then **Mr. Speaker**, that reforms must be coordinated. They must bring transparency. They must build competition and the framework that limits market abuse. Legislation must be modernised, and the public interest must always be in the room and at the table.

Working alongside the Cost-of-Living Commission, retailers, wholesalers, regulators, community organisations and international partners, we have translated the Agenda's recommendations into delivered measures.

Mr. Speaker,

The Affordable Bermuda Agenda has demonstrated what can be achieved when Government and the private sector work collaboratively in the public interest.

This morning, I will provide an update on the Agenda since its launch and specifically highlight the success of the Affordable Bermuda Basket, which will conclude its offering at the end of this month.

Mr. Speaker,

The Affordable Bermuda Agenda was never intended to be a static policy document but a living roadmap for action. The progress captured since its launch, with each pillar at a different stage of implementation, together represents a coordinated approach to affordability.

Mr. Speaker,

I will provide a brief capture of the successes recorded to date under each pillar.

Imports

Our geographic location exposes Bermuda to world market swings, so imports drive costs. Resilience here means more than strong buildings. It means redundant supply routes that increase competition and strengthen supply. Under this pillar we:

- Hosted Bermuda's first Virtual Trade Event on March 3rd 2026 with the United States Department of Commerce and the United States

Department of Agriculture, supported by the United States Consulate General. More than 60 U.S. businesses registered.

- Connected our wholesalers and retailers directly with U.S. producers, aggregators and logistics partners: 33 duty-free essential goods, volume pricing, and reliable freight lanes for the staples families buy every week.
- Engaged the Florida Citrus Commission on citrus importation.
- Began reviewing the import rules for milk and citrus to diversify supply, as requested by local businesses.
- Advanced regional engagement through the public consultation on deeper CARICOM engagement. Further analysis of the benefits comes before this House next session.

Food Security and Affordability

Mr. Speaker,

The cost of food is the number one concern. We were encouraged to help only those who need it most. 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 on May 8th 2026 includes rice, fruit and fresh vegetables and now enter at reduced or zero duty.
- Tabled the Cost of Living (Essential Commodities) Amendment Regulations 2026, requiring price reporting on essentials across seven categories, with technical assistance so small retailers are supported rather than burdened. Debate follows later this session.
- Launched the Grow. Eat. \$ave. parish garden pilot with the Ministry of Health. Participants have learned to grow fresh produce and cut grocery expenses, and the model is built to extend parish by parish.
- Delivered nine months of savings at the checkout through the Affordable Bermuda Basket.

Utilities

Mr. Speaker,

Electricity costs weigh on every household budget, and this year the Government moved energy reform from policy to legislation. Under this pillar we:

- Completed the first comprehensive review of the National Electricity Sector Policy in more than a decade. Public consultation closed on May 21st 2026. The revised Policy puts affordability, consumer protection and long-term sustainability at the centre of Bermuda's energy future.
- Advanced the Electricity Amendment Bill 2026 in this Honourable House on June 12th and in the Senate on June 17th, creating the foundation to reset integrated resource planning with consumer affordability protections embedded.
- Engaged telecommunications providers to offer fixed prices for residents and seniors, to be confirmed through regulatory review.
- Shielded drivers from the May fuel increase by Ministerial Direction and held prices steady for up to six months while a longer-term framework for economic stability is developed.
- Partnered with the Bermuda Housing Corporation to develop the Community Solar Pilot Programme, designed to give participating households more predictable electricity costs.

Housing

Mr. Speaker,

In the area of housing, between 2016 and 2023, Consumer Affairs recorded an average of 2,230 complaints each year, peaking above 4,300 in 2020, under legislation written in 1974 and 1978. The Ministry is replacing that framework. Under this pillar we:

- Led 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.

- Drew nearly 100 written submissions through public consultation, from the Chamber of Commerce Real Estate Division, the Bermuda Bar Association, and the real estate sector, with engagement held as recently as June.
- Set out clear rules on deposits, repairs and unlawful lockouts; a Landlord and Tenant Tribunal so disputes no longer depend on the Magistrates' Court alone; and support for a National Housing Registry.

Consumer Protection and Education

Mr. Speaker,

The final pillar recognises that affordability is strengthened when consumers are informed, protected and empowered. The reconstituted Cost of Living Commission, under a Chair appointed 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:

- Advanced amendments to bring critical services within the Commission's oversight: shipping and freight, wholesale and retail supply, and utilities, including electricity, telecommunications and trucked water.
- Met with Bermuda's banks on the banking costs households carry.
- Launched the National Consumer Rights and Pricing Education Campaign, with an initial focus on food security.
- Reached 210 students through the Dollars & Sense programme this year.
- Issued a consumer advisory in this Honourable House on June 12th warning the public about rental phishing scams that pressure house hunters to wire deposits for properties they have never viewed.
- Tested low fee digital payments under the Agenda's Digital Payments Pilot, building on the May 2025 Digital Finance Forum, where transaction fees averaged under two cents per payment.

Mr. Speaker,

Finally, young Bermudians now sit inside this work. On July 14th 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 a twelve-week summer placement in the Ministry Headquarters with responsibility for delivering a flagship initiative while also providing research, policy and data analytics support.

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. Their practical recommendations will support the Affordable Bermuda Agenda update to be published in the coming months.

Mr. Speaker,

I equally recognise the outstanding young Bermudians who have accepted appointments to serve on the inaugural Junior Cost of Living Commission chaired by Mr. Einnajae Caines. 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, Leeds Beckett University
7. Miss Ywione Darrell, Bermuda Monetary Authority
8. Miss Ajai Peets, Office of Youth Affairs
9. Mr. Zayne Sinclair, Youth Entrepreneur.

Mr. Speaker,

The Junior Cost of Living Commission convened its inaugural meeting this week, Tuesday, July 14th 2026. During the meeting, members examined the

purpose of the Junior Commission and discussed what affordability means from a youth perspective. They further observed that affordability challenges differ across the various stages of young adulthood and emphasised the importance of ensuring that future policy responses reflect these differing lived experiences. The Junior Commission agreed a work programme to:

- Examine the cost of living as experienced by young Bermudians, including groceries, transport, housing 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 user perspective.
- Produce a findings report with practical recommendations and present it to the full Commission on August 21st.

Mr. Speaker,

While these affordability initiatives represent important structural reforms that will continue to unfold over time, the Government knew that immediate financial pressure demanded immediate relief.

The Affordable Bermuda Basket

Mr. Speaker,

Food affordability emerged as a pressing concern throughout the public surveys, the stakeholder consultations and the discussions at the Cost-of-Living Summit. Families needed help now. The Affordable Bermuda Basket was created to deliver that help without delay.

Mr. Speaker,

Launched on November 1st 2025, the Affordable Bermuda 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 Bermuda 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. 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, so the full saving reached consumers on the essential grocery items they buy every week.

Mr. Speaker,

What began as a partnership with the MarketPlace and the Lindo's Group quickly gained momentum. The Garden Market joined the programme in November 2025, and The English Market followed in January 2026 as the fourth retail partner, opening a Hamilton location at Washington Mall and expanding access to discounted products across the island.

Bermuda's food wholesalers, BGA, Butterfield & Vallis, Viking Foods, and Dunkley's Dairy, carried their share of the reduction throughout the programme. Their participation made the savings possible.

Mr. Speaker,

Today, the Affordable Bermuda Basket encompasses 178 essential grocery and household products across the four participating retailers. The Basket includes many of the staple items that Bermudians purchase every week, rice, pasta, dairy products, baby formula, canned goods, household cleaning products, toiletries and other everyday necessities, with brands families recognise. The full product list has been public throughout the programme at costofliving.gov.bm.

The Ministry has maintained oversight of the savings throughout. Participating retailers reported monthly data on units sold, total sales value and the discounts applied, and the Ministry conducted regular operational checks with every partner.

As a result, Bermuda households have realised over \$750,000 in cumulative savings over the course of the initiative. Those are grocery dollars that remained in family budgets, helping parents stretch household incomes further, easing financial pressure on seniors living on fixed incomes, and

providing practical support to working families facing the continued challenges of higher living costs.

Mr. Speaker,

As originally announced, the Affordable Bermuda Basket was always intended to be a temporary relief measure, operating from November 1st 2025, through July 31st 2026.

It was designed to bridge the period between consultation and implementation by providing immediate assistance while legislative reforms and policy initiatives progressed. As the programme concludes at the end of this month, the Government will undertake a comprehensive evaluation of its outcomes, including consumer purchasing patterns, retailer participation, pricing stability and the overall impact on household affordability. I will report the findings of that evaluation to this Honourable House.

The lessons learned through this initiative will help shape the next phase of affordability measures and inform future partnerships with industry as we continue implementing the Affordable Bermuda Agenda.

Mr. Speaker,

This House asked what happens after July 31st. The answer stands in law. Duty relief on the expanded essential goods list took effect in May. The price transparency Regulations before this House will put essential price changes in public view. The Electricity Amendment Bill and the National Electricity Sector Policy write consumer affordability protections into energy planning. The consolidated Landlord and Tenant Act advances toward this Honourable House. Temporary relief carried families through the gap. Permanent reform now carries the work forward.

Mr. Speaker,

In conclusion, the Affordable Bermuda Agenda was founded on a simple undertaking: the people of Bermuda would see real progress on the cost of living through practical action, working partnerships and lasting reform.

Mr. Speaker,

I thank the members of the Cost-of-Living Commission for their leadership and diligence in strengthening consumer protection and promoting affordability across our island.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to our retail partners, The MarketPlace, the Lindo's Group, The Garden Market and The English Market, who chose to put Bermuda households first, and to our wholesale partners, BGA, Butterfield & Vallis, Viking Foods and Dunkley's Dairy, whose collaboration and shared investment made these savings possible for thousands of Bermuda families.

My sincere gratitude goes to the officers of the Ministry of Home Affairs for their support to deliver on these ambitious targets.

Finally, I thank the people of Bermuda. Your real stories and engagement informed our priorities, your voices guided our decisions, and your continued engagement remains essential as we build a more affordable Bermuda together.

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 listening produced the Agenda. The partnership produced the Basket. The legislation before this Honourable House carries the work beyond any single programme, toward a Bermuda where every family can afford to live, work and thrive. That is Unity, Equity and Tangible Progress in practice.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.