



2024/2025 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

13 DECEMBER 2024

Sitting number 5 of the 2024/2025 Session
(pages 295–392)

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

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13 DECEMBER 2024
10:10 AM**

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

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

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]

The Speaker: Good morning, Members.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

[Pause]

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 6 December 2024]

The Speaker: Members, the Minutes of the 6th of December have been circulated.

Are there any amendments required?

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

[Minutes of 6 December 2024 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 that they will be absent today: the Honourable Deputy Speaker [Derrick Burgess], MP Susan Jackson, MP Ben Smith and MP Jamahl Simmons have all indicated their absence for today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Speaker: There are none.

PAPERS AND OTHER COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE

The Speaker: We have two this morning.
Mr. Premier, would you like to present yours?

PRE-BUDGET REPORT IN ADVANCE OF FISCAL YEAR 2025/26

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

Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Pre-Budget Report in Advance of the fiscal year 2025/26.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister of Economy and Labour.

APPROVED HAMILTON RESIDENTIAL SCHEMES (AHRs) GUIDELINES

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 the Approved Hamilton Residential Schemes [AHRs] guidelines.

The Speaker: Thank you.

PETITIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Speaker: We have seven this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.
Premier.

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

The Speaker: Good morning.

FISCAL YEAR [2024/25] UPDATE

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda by providing an update on the Government's

fiscal performance and to share the details of the Pre-Budget Report for the fiscal year 2025/26 tabled earlier today. This document represents a vital step in the budget process, underscoring this Government's commitment to fiscal responsibility, transparency, collaboration and our unwavering dedication to reducing the financial burden on the people of Bermuda while making the required investment to improve the quality of life in Bermuda.

FY 2024/25 Update

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that Bermuda is still firmly on track to achieve Bermuda's first balanced budget in 21 years. Despite the challenges we have faced, including global economic uncertainty, the Government continues to deliver sound fiscal management. For fiscal year 2024/25, total revenue is projected to reach \$1.26 billion, an increase of \$30 million from the original estimate. This growth is driven by a recovering tourism sector, robust payroll tax collections and strong overall economic performance. Revenue has increased across all but one category, demonstrating the diversity of our economic growth beyond international business.

Mr. Speaker, on the expenditure side, we remain disciplined and are on track to meet our budget targets. Current account expenditures are projected at \$1 billion, reflecting the \$25 million social investment package addressing critical needs such as public safety, education, infrastructure, mental health and senior care. Despite these additional investments and the 60 per cent reduction in taxes on energy bills passed earlier this year, we are on track to deliver a surplus of at least \$4 million. This is a remarkable achievement when we consider that Bermuda was in the midst of a global health crisis just four years ago, which crippled our economy and devastated our tourism industry.

PRE-BUDGET REPORT [2025/26] TABLING OF

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will now turn my attention to the Pre-Budget Report, which is a strategic document that outlines the Government's economic priorities and fiscal principles in anticipation of the upcoming budget. It provides transparency, encourages public engagement and ensures accountability by inviting feedback on proposed policies and initiatives. The Pre-Budget Report also allows stakeholders and the wider public to help shape the final budget, aligning it with the needs and aspirations of our community.

Mr. Speaker, the theme of the 2024 Speech from the Throne was *A Fairer Bermuda for All*. This theme reflects a vision that guides every decision we make as a government because fairness is more than

a goal—it is the foundation of a just society. Fairness in taxation, fairness in housing, fairness in banking services, fairness in social services and access to resources and opportunities underpin a good quality of life. And a good quality of life in a fairer society is nothing less than what every Bermudian deserves.

Since returning to office, this Government has made delivering fairness our mission. We have worked to reduce the financial pressures on hard-working Bermudians and provide support where needed. Through initiatives such as reducing payroll taxes for 86 per cent of workers and all local businesses; expanding the Child Day Care Allowance, which has benefited hundreds of families; and eliminating customs duties on essential goods we have demonstrated our commitment to easing the burden on families and doing our part to ensure that more of the money that Bermudians work so hard for stays in their pockets.

But, Mr. Speaker, we know that the drive for fairness is a continuous battle and that for economic progress to be felt by all, we must continue to reduce the burden faced by many in our community. We are not just trying to undo decades of inequality and unfairness that benefitted the few over the many, but also confronting new challenges. Rising food costs due to global inflation, high health care and energy costs, limited housing options and ageing infrastructure remain at the forefront of the challenges our people face every day. This Pre-Budget Report lays out the next set of bold steps that this Government will take to tackle these challenges head-on, ensuring that our policies and investments deliver tangible benefits to the people of Bermuda.

FY 2025/26 Revenue Proposals

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Pre-Budget Report states clearly that the Government does not propose any broad-based tax or fee increases for the next fiscal year. This Government has a strong record of reducing the burden of taxation, and the Pre-Budget Report proposes additional measures to provide relief and continue this Government's commitment to addressing the cost of living and the daily struggles faced by families across the Island.

Mr. Speaker, electricity bills affect every person and business in Bermuda. Earlier this year the Government reduced the tax on energy by 60 per cent. In the next budget, the Government proposes to reduce the tax on energy by a further 20 per cent, representing a total 80 per cent reduction in taxes on energy.

Mr. Speaker, housing is a critical issue in Bermuda, and the Government must do all it can to support the building of new homes and the renovation of vacant or derelict units. To support this critical national priority, the Government proposes to eliminate customs duties on all building materials. This will di-

rectly lower the costs of building, renovating and maintaining homes, which will further boost construction activity in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, many Bermudians rely on their vehicles daily, and transportation costs remain a significant expense for many in our community. So, to provide further relief and build on previous reductions, the Government proposes to lower private car licensing fees by a further 10 per cent. Further, recognising the strain placed on vehicles travelling on our roads, the Government proposes to eliminate customs duty on parts used to maintain or repair motor vehicles. This elimination is proposed to include all motor vehicle parts and tyres.

Mr. Speaker, the personal allowance for duty when returning from overseas has not been adjusted since 2012. Therefore, the Government proposes to raise the personal duty-free allowance for returning residents from \$200 to \$300.

Mr. Speaker, connectivity is no longer a luxury but a necessity in our modern world. We recognise the financial strain of paying mobile phone bills, and to address this, the Government proposes to reduce the monthly tax on mobile phones by 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, land tax is a significant revenue earner for the Government but can also represent a burden for homeowners and renters alike. In 2019, a new base rate for land tax was introduced and set at \$300 a year. Given the country's financial progress, the time is right to reduce this tax and provide more tax relief. Therefore, the Government proposes to reduce the base rate of land tax for all residential properties by 50 per cent, to \$150.

Mr. Speaker, these measures are designed with fairness at their core. They focus on the areas that touch every Bermudian's life—energy, housing, transportation and connectivity. Each of these initiatives reflects this Government's understanding of the real challenges faced by our people and our determination to provide meaningful relief to taxpayers.

FY 2025/26 Current Expenditure Proposals

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, moving to current account expenditure, the Government is proposing a 3 per cent increase in current account spending. All department budgets will remain at 2024/25 levels into fiscal year 2025/26, inclusive of the funds allocated in the mid-year review. The 3 per cent increase in overall current expenditure is solely for additional employee expenses attributable to the need to increase public sector salaries and benefits to keep public sector employment competitive with the private sector. This year's Throne Speech highlighted the fact that the Government has conducted a review of public sector salaries and aims to make revisions to public sector salaries and benefits to ensure that the public service remains competitive with the private sector. This will require improving the Government Health Insurance

scheme and ensuring that revised salary structures and expected negotiated pay increases are all fully funded within the 2025/26 Budget.

FY 2025/26 Capital Expenditure Proposals

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, moving on to capital expenditure, Bermuda's infrastructure underpins the quality of life of our residents and supports our economic growth. Bermudians are reminded daily of the impact of over a decade of underinvestment in infrastructure. As we have restored public finances and delivered a balanced budget, this Government is committed to investing in projects that enhance our communities, create jobs for Bermudians and improve their everyday lives and experiences. In the last budget, we passed the largest capital expenditure budget in 15 years. In the last three years alone, we have committed \$25 million to bring 71 more affordable housing units online, with 118 more on the way to provide greater options for Bermudian families.

However, Mr. Speaker, this Government will continue to do more because Bermudians need and deserve more. For the fiscal year 2025/26, the Government proposes to increase capital spending by \$33 million, to \$145 million, which will fund an increase in the pace of road repaving following the installation of the new asphalt plant. This \$145 million allocation will also support critical infrastructure projects, including the

- replacement of the Swing Bridge, a vital link for our communities;
- additional investment in affordable housing to provide safe, secure shelter for all Bermudians;
- investments in public education infrastructure to support reforms and ensure our schools are equipped for the future;
- construction of a Senior's Day Care Facility to support our ageing population; and
- construction of the new Agricultural Service Centre to boost domestic food production.

Mr. Speaker, these projects are not just about bricks and mortar; they are about creating opportunities, improving lives and delivering on the pledges made by this Government.

Corporate Income Tax

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, 2025 will mark a significant milestone as Bermuda will begin to receive payments from the corporate income tax [CIT]. As outlined in the 2024/25 Budget Statement, the Government has conservatively projected \$187 million in corporate income tax revenues for the upcoming fiscal year. These funds will be used strategically to support the initiatives outlined in the Pre-Budget Report and ensure Bermuda's long-term fiscal stability.

Mr. Speaker, access to quality, affordable health care is fundamental to building a fairer Bermuda. The Pre-Budget Report outlines our plans to allocate \$50 million from the new corporate income tax revenues to launch universal health care. This investment will improve services at the hospital and expand access to preventative care and specialist visits to ensure that we improve the overall health of our population.

Budget Surplus, Debt Reduction
and Future Fiscal Year Outlook

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Budget surplus is projected to be \$84 million in fiscal year 2025/26. This amount, though much higher than expected, is necessary for the Government to build up reserves in the sinking fund to reduce Bermuda's debt. While this Government plans to invest in reducing health care costs for residents and businesses while boosting capital spending, we must also ensure that the \$605 million of debt due to be repaid in 2027 can be repaid in full without the need to refinance that debt at what may be higher interest rates. Therefore, in this report the Government is setting out a provisional Medium-Term Expenditure Framework [MTEF] that provides a path with future corporate income tax revenues to repay the \$605 million of debt due in January 2027 in full, Mr. Speaker. Net debt to GDP is expected to fall from 36 per cent in fiscal year 2024/25 to just 23 per cent in fiscal year 2027/28. Interest payments are projected to reduce from \$128 million in fiscal year 2025/26 to \$105 million in fiscal year 2027/28.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that these projections have been made on conservative estimates of CIT revenues, as the Government has not projected the expected \$750 million in the [MTEF] projection in fiscal years 2026/27 and 2027/28. If CIT revenues are higher than the \$600 million that has been used in these projections, the sinking fund will have higher balances to enable accelerated debt repayments while also considering any recommendations from the Tax Reform Commission for strategic investments, such as setting up a Sovereign Wealth Fund for future generations of Bermudians. In future years, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework provides for further tax reductions to reduce the cost of living and the cost of doing business in Bermuda while increasing capital spending to the 2 per cent of GDP target. The Government is not making any specific proposals for tax reductions in future fiscal years as we await the Tax Reform Commission's recommendations.

Public Invited to Participate

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Government invites the people of Bermuda to participate in shaping the policies and priorities that will impact their lives.

We encourage the public to review the Pre-Budget Report and the proposals contained within and share their feedback and recommendations through the government consultation portal at forum.gov.bm or by emailing openbudget@gov.bm. Prior to delivering the budget, the Ministry of Finance will hold meetings with key stakeholders including the Bermuda Trade Union Congress, the international business community, local business representatives and the most important stakeholder—the Bermudian taxpayers. These consultations will ensure that the upcoming budget reflects the needs and aspirations of our community.

Conclusion

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, as I close, I wish to affirm my sincere expectation that 2025 will be a transformative year in Bermuda. With the first revenue collections from the corporate income tax, we will not only deliver relief, but also make strategic investments to ensure long-term prosperity and set Bermuda on a path to repay its national debt. From universal health care to critical infrastructure projects like the replacement of Swing Bridge, we will lay the foundation for a stronger, more resilient Bermuda. This Government remains steadfast in its mission to ensure that every Bermudian feels the benefits of our sound fiscal management. Through careful planning, prudent decision-making and inclusive consultation, we are reducing costs for Bermudians while investing in our future.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has come a long way from the challenges of the global financial crisis, a long way from the One Bermuda Alliance's austerity budgets and a long way from the impact of a once-in-a-century pandemic. However, this Government has remained steadfast in our commitment to rebuilding Bermuda with Bermudians at heart to ensure that Bermudians are the beneficiaries of this Island's economic success. This Pre-Budget Report proposes bold initiatives to ease financial pressures, invest in critical infrastructure and improve access to health care, all while maintaining fiscal responsibility. It is a plan that will ensure that this Government delivers on its mission of *Building a Fairer Bermuda for All*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

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

Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

CLOSED SCHOOLS UPDATE

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I am pleased to report on the future use of closed and soon-to-be-closed schools and to give a look forward.

T. N. Tatem Middle School

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, in April 2019, the Minister of Education announced the permanent closure of the T. N. Tatem Middle School, and responsibility for its use reverted to the Ministry of Public Works. Mr. Speaker, as I reported then, the buildings could not simply remain shuttered while we decided their future use. Everyone knows what happens when any building in our sub-tropical climate is closed—it is the perfect environment for mould and mildew (Bermuda's national flower) to flourish. I conducted a tour of the facility to ascertain what steps should be taken to ensure the integrity, security and ongoing cleanliness of the buildings. We discussed the temporary repurposing of some buildings so that there remained a physical presence onsite to discourage vandalism, damage or even unauthorised occupancy of the buildings, all of which have occurred over this period.

Mr. Speaker, several classrooms—particularly those in the family services block, a single-story structure at the eastern end of the property—were suitable for various community activities that could provide the physical presence we sought. Included in that area is a weight-training room, carpentry and woodwork shops, family studies, a kitchen and counselling rooms along with bathroom facilities. All these areas were evaluated for mould or air quality issues.

Mr. Speaker, Pembroke Hamilton Club (PHC) have had a long-standing lease arrangement with the Ministry of Public Works for the use of the playing field for both football training and their multitude of community programmes. So, it was a natural fit to approach them first to see if there could be some temporary expanded use of the school facilities that could assist with their programmes. They were very receptive to the offer, and we have provided use of classroom space for their after-school programmes and bathroom facilities.

Mr. Speaker, at that time there were five entities occupying space at the facility. They included the following:

- Bermuda's most outstanding professional boxer, Mr. Nikki Bascome, who runs a boxing gym that also caters to young folk interested in the sport.
- Mr. Michiko Campbell (now joined by Mr. Darius Richardson) who runs an after-school carpentry programme for students.
- Ms. Gina Thomas is running Hidden Treasures Thrift Boutique.

- Mrs. Lucinda Worrell-Stowe ran Positive Energy Community Kitchen.
- Mr. Cervio Cox is running a fitness gym in the gymnasium that is geared more to the casual fitness buff rather than the hard-core gym rat.

Mr. Speaker, sadly Mrs. Worrell-Stowe passed earlier this year, and we have identified another chef to take over the community kitchen. The Ministry intends to purchase the equipment so that the site can remain a community kitchen where entrepreneurs can book kitchen time to prepare their goods. Mrs. Worrell-Stowe also used the kitchen to teach difficult students how to cook and become productive citizens. Discussions are ongoing with the new operator to still include that option that helped so many young people.

Mr. Speaker, over the five years that the site has been occupied, 11 other community-minded groups and/or individuals have taken space: Restoration Ministries of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; Tomorrow's Voices, the autism charity; GracePoint Church; Omar Smith, 24/7 Ink The Press Shop; Dondre Morris, martial arts and after-school programme; Reuben Bean, Jiketsu Martial Arts, Fitness and Natural Healing Centre; entrepreneurs Keola Thompson, Teja Warner, Sherron Mills, Shirmeka Brown and Akil Darrell. These all have storage space at the site.

Mr. Speaker, Tatem is fully booked now, and there is a waiting list for space. Each organisation must have a community aspect to their business. The site is a thriving community that willingly share resources and work well together. Each entity pays a nominal fee toward electricity use based on space and type of activities they are involved in.

Heron Bay Primary School

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, the next school to close was the Heron Bay Primary School. While several options have been considered, the Government has decided to establish a sustainable government-backed co-operative grocery store to introduce competition into the local food market to reduce overall food prices in Bermuda and provide investment and wealth generation opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Government initiative co-operative food vendor project is an integral part of the Government's larger cost of living reduction measures strategy to specifically address the increasing cost of living in Bermuda. Expressed public discontent with the rising cost of living in Bermuda has been most reflected in the increased cost of food. Government provided duty relief for 33 essential food commodity items in July 2022 whereby the objective was for the cost savings on the alleviation of import duty for grocers could be reflected in a reduction of retail pricing for commodity food items. Statistical retail sales data provided by the Department of Statistics has shown

that this has not been the case, as there has been no substantive reduction in retail pricing of commodity items by local grocers. This necessitated the need to introduce a substantive, direct measure to address the issue of food pricing in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I suspect that there will be an outcry from the grocery store community, but we are left with little choice when they refuse to collaborate with us and reduce their prices. A government-supported co-operative grocery store is well placed to directly address this issue by offering affordable food options directly to the consumer. This initiative is a unique opportunity for the Government to affect food prices through the introduction of competition in the local market while also providing wealth-building opportunities for the community through co-operative investment prospects. Work on this initiative is advancing apace with a full view of operation by next year.

Clearwater Middle School

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, Clearwater Middle School has also temporarily closed as a Middle School with the long-term plan to convert it to a senior school. The school remains under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education who have indicated that it will be temporarily repurposed for use as a special school so that the current vandalism and destruction can be arrested and the asset protected.

Gilbert Institute

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, Gilbert Institute is scheduled for closure next year. The Government has decided to convert this site into a Seniors Care facility, having first considered Heron Bay. The Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, under which this will fall, is already collaborating with the Ministry of Public Works to advance this initiative before the school closes so that conversion works can commence immediately upon closure.

Mr. Speaker, as we progress through the education reform and other schools near their closing, the Government will seek new uses for those facilities and encourage those in the community looking for space to apply.

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 Speaker: Good morning.

APPROVED HAMILTON RESIDENTIAL SCHEMES GUIDELINES

Hon. Jason Hayward: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present to this Honourable House the Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme Guidelines. These Guidelines outline the application process for the Approved Hamilton Residential Schemes and detail the additional information and criteria that will be considered during the application review. Furthermore, I am delighted to announce that the Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme is now open for applications.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Government is dedicated to stimulating economic growth with a particular emphasis on the development of housing in the capital City of Hamilton. By focusing on residential construction, the Government aims to attract more residents to the city, thereby boosting local businesses and creating a more vibrant and dynamic urban environment.

Mr. Speaker, the vision for the City of Hamilton, a city that seamlessly integrates homes, employment opportunities and recreational attractions, aligns with the Economic Development Strategy 2023–2027. It underscores our commitment to growing the residential population of the Island's capital, recognising the pivotal role that residential development plays in revitalising the city.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Government launched the Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme to encourage investment in residential properties within the City of Hamilton. By increasing the number of residents in Hamilton, we anticipate a significant boost in investment in complementary services such as shopping, dining and entertainment. This in turn will enhance the prospects for investors to see positive returns on their city investments.

Mr. Speaker, the Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme will allow non-Bermudians, exempted companies, and overseas or exempted partnerships to participate in Hamilton's residential property market by developing residential dwelling units. This initiative not only facilitates foreign direct investment but also reinforces the city as the Island's premier international business, retail and recreational hub.

Mr. Speaker, once granted, an Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme approval will remain in effect indefinitely. This provision protects against revocation and expropriation risks, providing long-term security for investors. Furthermore, it guarantees that the ownership of any subsequently purchased residential unit will be unaffected by the immigration status of the buyer, ensuring stability and confidence in the market.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, the Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme represents a forward-thinking approach to urban development. By fostering a thriving residential community in Hamilton, we are laying the groundwork for sustained economic growth

and a vibrant, dynamic city that benefits all Bermudians.

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.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good morning.

NATIONAL SENIORS STRATEGY 2024–2030— “CELEBRATING LIFE AND AGEING WELL”

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good Morning, Honourable Members and fellow Bermudians, Today I am honoured to announce the launch of Bermuda’s first National Seniors Strategy. It brings me great pride to share the progress made in fulfilling the Government’s 2020 Throne Speech initiative, which was to develop a National Seniors Strategy with an emphasis on dementia care.

Mr. Speaker, the strategy aims to not only address the challenges faced by our seniors, but also to guide collaborative efforts across all sectors of society—the government, community and beyond—to uncover opportunities that will enhance the health, well-being and quality of life of our seniors and future generations. This landmark strategy represents a significant milestone in our dedication to supporting Bermuda’s ageing population, ensuring that they can age with dignity, independence and a high quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, with seniors projected to represent approximately 25 per cent of our population by 2026, this strategy comes at a crucial time. The Ministry’s extensive consultation process reached community stakeholders in the public, private and charitable sectors who were invited to participate in various focus group sessions and town hall discussions, and also to complete surveys. The consultation process concluded with a draft copy of the strategy placed on the Government’s Citizens Forum website for a further four weeks during September and October to obtain input and feedback from the general public.

Mr. Speaker, the National Seniors Strategy was made available for public consultation from September 23, 2024, until October 18, 2024. During this time, the Ministry received a variety of feedback responses. Many of the public’s responses were consistent, highlighting issues such as the implementation and governance of the strategy, the financial challenges faced by seniors due to the high cost of living, health care and caregiver support, as well as the need for improved accessibility and stronger community support for seniors.

The feedback received from the public was thoroughly reviewed, and it was very pleasing to find

that the draft strategy already included provisions for many of the issues pointed out. For example, Pillar 1 tackles the affordability of health care and long-term care services, while also aligning initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles throughout the life course, as outlined in the Bermuda Health Strategy. Pillar 2 focuses on caregiver support and addresses cost of living concerns including pensions and retirement savings. Pillar 3 covers accessibility, and Pillar 4 emphasises community support, engagement and collaboration.

Mr. Speaker, there was concern expressed about ensuring that the strategy would not just be a document placed on file but would be living. We agree, Mr. Speaker. To support the successful governance of this National Seniors Strategy, a project manager will be hired and appointed to steer the execution of the action items. Under the strategic oversight of the Ministry Headquarters, the project manager will be responsible for overseeing the implementation, coordination and regular reporting necessary to achieve the desired outcomes outlined in the strategy. We are committed to making continuous progress toward the goals set forth in the National Seniors Strategy over the six years 2024 to 2030.

Mr. Speaker, the information gathered from the consultation process helped shape a comprehensive framework for a National Seniors Strategy built on four key pillars, as follows:

- Pillar 1—Healthy Ageing;
- Pillar 2—Empowered Citizens;
- Pillar 2—Age-Friendly Environments; and
- Pillar 4—Community.

Mr. Speaker, let me now expand on the elements of each of these four pillars. Pillar 1, Healthy Ageing, emphasises the importance of a robust system of governance, effective coordination and ensuring equal access to affordable and essential services for our seniors. These services aim to enhance overall health, quality of life and well-being throughout all stages of life. This comprehensive approach highlights the following:

- Governance and Coordination—establishing clear policies, regulations, and structures to oversee and integrate health and social care systems efficiently.
- Accessibility and Affordability—ensuring that everyone, regardless of socio-economic status, can access services necessary for maintaining health and well-being.
- Life Course Perspective—addressing the needs of every individual at every stage of life—childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age—through tailored support and services.

Mr. Speaker, healthy ageing depends on access to affordable, person-centred long-term care services that assist individuals with daily activities over an extended period. To ensure sustainable and effective progress in this sector, a thorough evaluation of

health, social and long-term care system funding is essential. Additionally, caregiving plays a vital role in the current health and long-term care framework, making it imperative to prioritise and support caregiver well-being. This integrated perspective acknowledges that healthy ageing is not just about the individuals receiving care, but also about ensuring the sustainability of the systems and the well-being of those providing care.

Mr. Speaker, Pillar 2, Empowered Citizens, champions the right for seniors to actively participate in, contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural and political activities. Protecting the rights of our seniors fosters dignity, well-being and inclusion, which together build a society of empowered individuals—citizens who confidently exercise their right to self-determination, make decisions about their lives and access the support needed to live independently for as long as possible. Active participation in society, particularly in economic activities, plays a crucial role in ensuring financial security. Through this pillar, the Government commits to taking action to strengthen income and economic security for all.

Mr. Speaker, Pillar 3, Age-Friendly Environments, emphasises the enhancement of age-friendly environments that prioritise accessibility, safety and inclusivity, ensuring that they cater to the needs of individuals of all ages. Our seniors desire to continue doing the things they love and value for as long as possible. This means that spaces open to the public should be accessible, allowing us all to navigate comfortably despite our age or ability. Accessible and dependable transportation options must be made available to ensure that our seniors can easily reach the places they need to go. In addition, housing options should be both affordable and diverse to accommodate the various needs of our ageing population. Whether the desire is to age at home, live with family or choose living spaces designed for seniors, housing options must evolve to meet the needs of our residents.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, Pillar 4, Community, underscores the importance of community. When our community is connected, we are better able to address common challenges that limit our ability to age well and support and protect our most vulnerable. John Donne, a known poet and scholar famously wrote as follows:

“No man is an island,
Entire of itself;
Every man is a piece of the continent,
A part of the main.”

His words highlight the interconnectedness of humanity; and Pillar 4 echoes this idea, urging us to foster close-knit communities where everyone can feel a sense of belonging and support. Pillar 4 calls on the community to reclaim the village spirit, embracing empathy and a culture of mutual care, where we look out for one another, share knowledge and work together

to reduce social isolation and loneliness—two significant challenges that many seniors face.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda National Seniors Strategy 2024–2030 is a comprehensive framework that requires extensive collaboration across ministries, sectors and stakeholders. Its successful implementation depends on coordinated efforts between various government ministries, departments, non-profit organisations, health care providers and community partners.

As detailed in the strategy’s implementation section and stakeholder alignments, each pillar—from Healthy Ageing to Community Engagement—requires multiple entities working together to achieve the stated goals. The strategy acknowledges that no single organisation can tackle the complex challenges of an ageing population alone. This is demonstrated by the extensive cross-referencing of initiatives and action items that span across organisational boundaries, such as the coordination between health care services, housing development, transportation infrastructure and social support systems. A cohesive partnership between the public, private and charitable sectors is essential to create an age-friendly Bermuda that supports the well-being and quality of life of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, today’s launch marks the culmination of dedicated work involving a wide range of stakeholders across our community, including seniors, caregivers, health care providers and many other organisations. This strategy incorporates insights from successful initiatives such as the Dementia Care Services pilot programme that commenced in October 2023, which provided a valuable understanding of the specific needs of our senior population. The Ministry is currently collaborating with the Bermuda Health Council to develop an Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia Care Services that will form a critical branch of the Seniors Strategy.

Mr. Speaker, we listened to our seniors during the consultation process. Many shared their personal stories and emphasised the need for greater access to dementia care services. Thus, the Ministry with the technical support of the Bermuda Health Council is taking a strategic approach to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based assessment of current dementia care practices on the Island to develop an Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia. This strategic approach will result in recommending actional steps for enhancing dementia care in Bermuda in alignment with international best practices. Key deliverables that will help shape the Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia include

1. the completion of the patient journey map;
2. development of patient personas;
3. service mapping and a gap analysis;
4. a desktop review and documentation of best practices; and

5. a workshop series for stakeholder engagement and feedback.

Mr. Speaker, the development of the Integrated Care Pathway for Dementia will span an estimated six months from November when the preliminary work commenced.

Mr. Speaker, the National Seniors Strategy 2024–2030 outlines concrete actions and measurable goals for the next six years. Implementation will begin immediately for those action items within the remit of the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, with regular progress updates to ensure accountability and effectiveness. However, Mr. Speaker, you will recall, and I have shared this previously, that all of us have a part to play. The implementation of the strategy actions will require a coordinated and collaborative approach by different government ministries and departments and a whole-community approach involving different private and charitable agencies. The action items are achievable. The vision of the National Seniors Strategy is *An inclusive Bermuda that celebrates and prepares responsibly for ageing*. We are all ageing. I challenge each of us to take ownership of this strategy and let us work together to prepare responsibly for ageing for all.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda's first-ever National Seniors Strategy 2024–2030, is available on the Government's website at www.gov.bm. Hard copies can also be obtained from the Office of Ageing and Disability Services and the Ministry Headquarters. I encourage my honourable colleagues and the public to review the National Seniors Strategy, as it will affect all of us as it provides a blueprint for supporting Bermuda's seniors to ensure that they *Celebrate Life and Age Well!*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak before this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, as we approach the end of this calendar year, I am pleased to provide an updated report on the status and outlook of Bermuda's airlift, a cornerstone of both our economy and tourism industry. As I emphasised earlier this year, airlift serves as Bermuda's critical link to the world, facilitating access to essential medical care, welcoming visitors, supporting commerce and enabling leisure travel. It is a powerful catalyst, driving opportunities, generating revenue, creating jobs and enriching our quality of life. Airlift is the engine propelling our growth, allowing inno-

vation, advancing [development] and securing our shared prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport remains dedicated to its commitment to strengthening Bermuda's airlift capacity, quality and diversity, ensuring resilience and robust support for our local population particularly in meeting critical medical needs. We are equally focused on positioning Bermuda as an appealing and accessible destination for leisure and business travellers alike. Today I will share an update on trends in airlift performance, the challenges we have successfully navigated, and the opportunities we are actively pursuing. I will also emphasise the significant benefits that airlift brings to Bermuda's economy and its people.

Mr. Speaker, I will present an overview of the trends in Bermuda's airlift capacity over the past seven years, including 2024 year to date to end of October, including the following developments achieved:

- In 2018, Bermuda enjoyed a robust airlift capacity with around 611,000 seats available.
- In 2019, seat capacity experienced a slight decline, dropping to approximately 580,000, a reduction of about 5 per cent compared to the previous year.
- The global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 led to a sharp contraction in airlift capacity, reaching a historic low of just over 170,000 seats—a staggering 71 per cent decrease from 2019.
- In 2021, the sector began to recover, with seat capacity rising to roughly 237,000, an increase of about 39 per cent from the previous year.
- This recovery momentum continued in 2022, as seat capacity climbed to approximately 356,000, marking a significant growth of 50 per cent compared to 2021.
- By 2023, airlift capacity had further expanded to around 433,000 seats, reflecting an additional 22 per cent growth from the previous year.
- At the end of October 2024, the airlift capacity stands at 466,350, which exceeded the total seat capacity for 2023 by 8 per cent.
- The year to date to October 2024 versus the previous period in 2023 was 466,350 seats versus 370[,789] seats, a 26 per cent increase.

Mr. Speaker, as I have emphasised before, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic in 2020, we remained steady in our commitment to maintaining Bermuda's airlift and resolute in our optimism for recovery. We took focused measures to safeguard public health, support our airline partners, stimulate demand and rebuild confidence in our connectivity.

Mr. Speaker, one of the key commitments the Government made to ensure that Bermuda and its people remained connected to the global community

was to uphold our obligations under the Guaranteed Minimum Regulated Revenue (GMMR) provision within the agreement with Skyport, which was triggered by the pandemic in 2020. As part of this, the Government made the following payments to Skyport over the various fiscal years:

- \$21[,003,885] was paid in year 2020/21;
- \$16[,030,832] was paid in year 2021/22;
- \$9[,436,473] was paid in year 2022/23;
- \$351[,526] was paid in year 2023/24; and
- \$56[,022] was paid in year 2024, to date; and
- \$46,878,738 in total has been paid.

Mr. Speaker, these payments were not merely transactions to uphold an agreement; they played a crucial role in ensuring that Bermuda has remained viable, sustainable and accessible to the global community. The funds provided a foundation for the Island's continued prosperity, enabling its economic stability and growth. Furthermore, sustaining international connections and ensuring Bermuda as a thriving hub that is not only resilient but also open and welcoming to the global community was essential, and likewise, ensuring our people the same.

Mr. Speaker, as noted in 2023 we reached nearly 433,000, an increase of 22 per cent over 2022. As I envisioned earlier this year, the upward trajectory continued in that the airlift capacity increased even further in 2024. These rising figures reflect Bermuda's strong recovery and stand as a testament to our resilience and adaptability in overcoming adversity. The continued growth in air travel highlights our capacity not only to weather challenges but to emerge stronger, reaffirming Bermuda's status as a premier destination of choice.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Transport, in close collaboration with our esteemed partner stakeholders, has been persistent in his efforts to enhance airlift services. I am pleased to share some of the significant achievements we have accomplished this year, which have contributed to the growth in our airlift capacity.

American Airlines launched its flights between Washington Reagan National Airport [DCA] and Bermuda, with seasonal flights that resumed in April 2024. This route offers convenient connections to the US capital and beyond, as well as increasing our exposure to a key political and business market. While the seasonal Washington flight will continue to 2025, it will commence two months later in June 2025.

American Airlines resumed its daily non-stop service to Miami on November 5, 2023, extending its year-round connectivity from Miami to Bermuda. This complements the already-established year-round services from New York's JFK airport and seasonal daily flights from Philadelphia. American Airlines has made seasonal adjustments to its schedule for their Miami and Charlotte flights in January and February 2025.

JetBlue continues to offer year-round service to Boston, significantly enhancing our connectivity and

boosting local passenger satisfaction, particularly for those traveling for medical purposes. The re-establishment of this essential route in the fall of 2023 has expanded our travel options and underscores our commitment to providing convenient and reliable air travel solutions.

BermudAir celebrated its first anniversary in September 2024, and the airline has established connections with seven major markets—Boston; Westchester, New York; Baltimore; Fort Lauderdale; Orlando; Toronto; and Halifax, representing a noteworthy achievement in our expansion efforts to provide increased travel options. BermudAir has also announced plans to expand to three additional markets in Montreal, Quebec; Hamilton, Ontario; and Norfolk, Virginia.

Mr. Speaker, this year United Airlines began flying year-round from New York's Newark airport to Bermuda for the first time since 2016.

Mr. Speaker, on June 1, 2024, United Airlines celebrated 35 years of serving Bermuda, a milestone that underscores their long-standing dedication to our Island. I extended my gratitude for their decades of service and their commitment to Bermuda, highlighted by their recent expansion of seat capacity on the Newark-to-Bermuda route.

Mr. Speaker, British Airways continues to provide Bermuda's main connection to the United Kingdom with its direct service to London Heathrow. I met with senior British Airways officials in London in October 2024 to discuss partnerships and strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening the long-standing air connection between Bermuda and London.

Mr. Speaker, our other long-standing airline partners are Delta Airlines and Air Canada, who provide air service to Atlanta, New York's JFK and Toronto. I met with senior officials at these airlines' headquarters in 2023 to discuss collaborative efforts to grow their air connections.

Mr. Speaker, our smallest airline partner is Azores Airlines who provide a seasonal and increasingly popular connection to the Azores with connection options to Europe.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to all of those who have contributed to the success of our [airlift] and continue to support our efforts to expand and improve it. I thank our airline partners, the Airport Authority, Skyport, the Tourism Authority, hoteliers, travel agents, taxi drivers, hospitality workers and all public servants who are dedicated to ensuring the success of our [airlift] system.

I wish to conclude by saying that airlift is not just a means of transport; it is a source of inspiration. It is not solely about Bermuda, but about connecting us to the world. It is not just about flights, but about the feelings they inspire. Airlift is not only about today, but about securing our future for tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Minister.

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

The Speaker: Good morning.

MENTAL WELL-BEING: PRIORITISING SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: The Christmas holiday is a time to embrace the joy of togetherness, share meals and traditions, and bask in the warmth of the season. For many, it is a festive time of celebration, but for some, the bells of joy and happiness may not be ringing loudly. The holidays, while a time of joy and celebration, can also bring stressors such as the pressure of gift-giving, busy schedules, distance from loved ones or the grief of losing someone dear. These challenges can make it hard to fully embrace the festive season. That is why it is crucial to prioritise mental health during this time. Taking steps to manage stress, acknowledging one's feelings and seeking support when needed can make a significant difference in the state of our overall well-being.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this Honourable House on several occasions, it is important to remember that caring for one's mental health is just as vital as physical health, especially when facing emotional challenges. By taking time for self-care and kindness, and reaching out for help when necessary, navigating the holiday season can be done with greater resilience and peace of mind.

Mr. Speaker, for anyone who is finding the holidays difficult, here are a few reminders to help cope:

First, set a realistic budget for how much you can comfortably spend and stick to it. It is easy to get carried away with holiday shopping, but keeping track of your finances is key to avoiding stress. Remember, thoughtful gifts do not have to or need to come with a high price tag. This Christmas, consider giving the gift of your time—whether it is volunteering with a local charity or offering assistance to a neighbour in need. A heartfelt gesture can often mean more than a material gift, and it helps spread holiday cheer in a meaningful way.

Mr. Speaker, second, thoughtfully plan your activities and carve out time for the things that matter most to you. Be sure to include time for rest and the enjoyment of your favourite leisure activities.

Third, set aside time to connect with people, places or activities that bring you joy. Whether it is spending time with friends, attending community events, or engaging in hobbies, these connections

can boost your happiness and mental health. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, do not forget to check in on our seniors, who may experience social isolation especially during the holidays. Regular visits, phone calls or simple gestures of kindness can make a big difference in their emotional well-being, helping them feel valued and supported.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, prioritise self-care by maintaining a balanced diet, moderating alcohol consumption, engaging in regular physical activity and ensuring that you get enough sleep. These habits are essential for both mental and physical well-being, helping to improve mood, reduce stress and boost energy levels. Taking small steps each day to care for your body can have a significant positive impact on your mental health.

Fifth, it is important to pay close attention to your feelings during the holiday season. Recognise when you're feeling overwhelmed, anxious or down, and do not hesitate to express how you are feeling to your loved ones. Let them know how they can support you—whether it is through a simple walk, sharing a meal or just spending time together. These small gestures can have a big impact on your mental and emotional well-being.

If you are finding it particularly challenging to cope, remember that it is okay to reach out for support. Whether it is a community mental health provider, a support group or a faith-based organisation, there are resources available to help you through these difficult times. Mr. Speaker, it takes courage to recognise when you need support, and reaching out is a proactive first step toward healing and maintaining your mental well-being. By asking for help, you are taking control of your health, demonstrating strength in facing challenges and making a significant difference in your journey toward healing and peace.

Mr. Speaker, we want to remind the community that seeking help for mental health is not a sign of weakness, but rather an important and powerful step toward maintaining well-being. Openly discussing mental health, reducing stigma and encouraging supportive conversations are essential in creating an environment where everyone feels comfortable asking for help. By continuing to openly talk about it, we can foster a stronger, more compassionate community that values the importance of mental health care and support. So let us remember to spread kindness and look out for those who may be struggling this Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, the holidays can be especially tough for those already facing mental health challenges, which is why we must continue to create a supportive environment for all. The Government, through its comprehensive package interventions, is committed to creating a supportive environment designed to identify and respond to the mental health needs of our population. We are enthused about the imminent rollout of our anti-stigma campaigns, targeted pro-

grammes and community partnerships for the promotion of mental wellness.

Mr. Speaker, as we navigate the holiday season and beyond, let us continue our conversations, advocacy and support for mental health. Together we can foster the knowledge and strength to cope with life's stresses, seek help when needed and offer support to others. By having open conversations and offering compassion to one another, we can build a community where everyone feels supported and valued. In closing, Mr. Speaker, I wish Bermuda a Christmas filled with peace, warmth and mental health wellness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Members, the final Statement this morning is in the name of the Minister for the Cabinet [Office].

Minister, go ahead.

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Hon. Crystal Caesar: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind this Honourable House of the critical role played by the Department of Planning in supporting the Island community from economic, social and environmental perspectives, as well as shaping Bermuda's future. The department is responsible for a wide range of functions including the review and approval of development applications, the preparation and implementation of planning policies and the provision of expert planning advice.

Mr. Speaker, an equally important function of the department is Building Control, which ensures that all building work, new or existing, adheres to stringent life safety standards. This oversight is essential to prevent loss of life and property damage. Building Control extends beyond structures to encompass construction processes and site protection, ensuring compliance with rigorous guidelines in the interests of welfare and the quality of our built environment. Building Control, in collaboration with the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service and the Department of Health, reviews and issues over 800 permits and 400 permit revisions per year. Depending on the type and content of the application, each building control review could take between a few days and 10 to 12 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Planning has recently partnered with the GO Program, a European Union funded initiative, in facilitating the review of the building code with an emphasis being placed on sustainability and energy efficiency. The key areas to be addressed are

- structural resilience (i.e., building resilience to extreme weather);
- energy efficiency (i.e., building energy performance);

- rain water capture and storage (i.e., for potable water use); and
- storm water mitigation strategies (i.e., flooding mitigation on individual land plots).

Mr. Speaker, the primary considerations will be the minimum standards to be incorporated in the newly proposed building code and ensuring that careful trade-offs are made on mandatory minimum standards versus affordability (i.e., in light of the cost of building measures). The department within the past two years has been afforded the authority through legislative amendments to impose civil penalties on owners, agents and contractors who violate planning regulations.

Mr. Speaker, this empowers the department to require developers to comply with the relevant regulations and deter future infractions whilst generating revenue for government. This deterrent is critical to protecting Bermuda's environment from damage caused by unlawful development, and it is hoped that such penalties will provide comfort to the community that planning regulations are being properly enforced.

Mr. Speaker, during this year, the department has supported changes to legislation that affect retroactive applications which, together with the introduction of civil penalties, has allowed applications for retroactive planning permission to be processed efficiently whilst ensuring that those who have breached planning control are appropriately penalised. This calendar year alone, Mr. Speaker, the department has received 408 planning applications. A dedicated team of staff evaluates these applications and submits recommendations to the Development Applications Board or the Director. Decisions are made using a pragmatic approach based on careful consideration of the relevant planning policies, the characteristics of sites and their surroundings, and the circumstances of each particular case that includes consideration of feedback from the public and other government consultees. The department also offers a pre-consultation service through which advice on development proposals can be obtained free of charge.

Mr. Speaker, the department is actively engaged in several key initiatives, such as

- the creation of a new General Development Order which will expedite the planning process for forms of development which are unlikely to pose adverse impacts including the introduction of permitted changes of use;
- the replacement of the Advertisements Regulation Act 1911 to allow unauthorised advertisements to be dealt with more effectively and efficiently;
- introducing a Competent Persons Scheme which will allow professionals to self-certify certain forms of development such as the installation of solar panels, which will significantly improve efficiency in the building permit process;

- the biennial City Health Check assesses vacancy rates in Hamilton and provides valuable insights for future development;
- the identification and promotion of development opportunities for vacant or derelict properties through a dedicated story map;
- the preparation and publication of an annual housing land audit providing detailed analysis of the Island's housing sector with a view to informing future planning policy;
- preparation of a comprehensive listed building audit to ensure the list is up to date and informed by contemporary best practice methodology; and
- exploring the creation of an online database of land available for agricultural purposes to support healthy lifestyles and sustainable food production.

Mr. Speaker, the upcoming City of Hamilton Plan represents a significant milestone in shaping Bermuda's future. Through a collaborative approach, the department has incorporated meaningful public input resulting in a plan that fosters mixed-use development, a vibrant city centre and sustainable economic growth. The plan's flexible approach to urban planning and the introduction of placemaking principles have the potential to reinvigorate the city and make efficient use of its resources.

Mr. Speaker, despite these sterling efforts, the department faces challenges including significant staffing shortages and a high volume of substandard planning and building permit applications. The submission of deficient applications results in technical officers having to review the same proposal multiple times which in turn causes delays in the processing of other applications. I would like to read that again. The submission of deficient applications results in technical officers having to review the same proposal multiple times which in turn causes delays in the processing of other applications.

Mr. Speaker, recent global economic events have significantly impacted the property investment market, increasing investor risk aversion and the demand for quicker returns. As a result, there is growing pressure to develop tourism-zoned land for residential use. This trend requires the planning profession to adapt to increasingly complex [development] proposals, balancing economic viability with long-term land use needs. To address these challenges, Mr. Speaker, the department has implemented several strategies including hiring consultants to bolster its capacity and participating in the Government Bursary Award programme to support young Bermudian talent. The department has a strong track record of successfully employing Bermudian professionals through this programme, including the current Director and several other staff members.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, the department is one of the few government departments to have fully

embraced a paperless system, enhancing efficiency and productivity.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Planning fosters collaboration with the public, industry stakeholders and other government departments to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for Bermuda. To this end, the department regularly engages with organisations such as the Institute of Bermuda Architects, the Professional Engineers Registration Council and the Chamber of Commerce to stay informed about current trends and concerns. The department remains accessible to the public through various channels and actively promotes interdepartmental collaboration to drive positive change.

Mr. Speaker, the planning system often involves balancing competing interests, which can lead to stakeholder dissatisfaction. The Department of Planning operates within a complex environment, managing a wide range of challenging functions. Despite these challenges, the department's dedicated staff strives to make reasonable, balanced and informed decisions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning process.

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.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: We have a report from the Standing Orders and Privileges Committee. The Government Whip will introduce that report.

Government Whip.

REPORT OF THE STANDING ORDERS AND PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Deputy Speaker and on behalf of the Standing Orders and Privileges Committee, I submit for the information of the Members of this Honourable House the report. And I will quote a portion of it.

"The Committee held meetings on the 25th and 29th of November 2024 to consider several matters including proposals for amendments to the House Standing Orders relating to parliamentary committees." *[Unverified quote]*

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Government Whip, for standing in for the Deputy [Speaker]. We appreciate that.

PREMIER'S QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Members, that now moves us on to the Question Period. And today is the second Friday of the month. And on the second Friday of the month, for those listening on the radio, we have Premier's Questions before we go into the Question Period. So, this morning we will have Premier's Questions, and that is a 30-minute period. And then we will do the 60-minute Question Period afterward.

Premier, we have Members who would like to put questions to you this morning. Let me acknowledge that the Opposition Leader has gone out unwell, and the Opposition Whip has been deputised on his behalf. And we have agreed that he will [ask] the questions.

So, the first questions this morning are from the Opposition Whip on behalf of the Opposition Leader.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: There you go.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, yes. By the looks of things, very close. Today's Statements.

[Laughter]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I apologise for the Leader's not feeling well. We know that the flu has been going around, and certainly he does not want any of us to be afflicted by the same.

QUESTION 1: CLEAN AIR AMENDMENT ACT, POSSIBLE DELAY OF

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: My first question then would be, Mr. Speaker, considering the revelation this morning gazetted by the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition [BCAC], we are just wondering if the Premier, considering the major concerns that have been voiced today by the BCAC, would entertain delaying this Clean Air Amendment Act at this time considering the major concerns that have been voiced today.

The Speaker: I will just clarify for everybody. It is a matter on the Order Paper, so we normally do not address it.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: But your question is, Would he consider delaying it?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: That is correct. Yes.

The Speaker: So, I am expecting that it is not getting into the gist of the Bill that will be discussed.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: No, no.

The Speaker: You are just asking if it would be delayed?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Okay.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that clarification. Of course it was on the Order Paper, so that question would be typically out of order.

But let me try to recite the history on this, Mr. Speaker. This Bill has been a long time coming. I am going to share information with the House. This Bill was set forward to be tabled at the end of the summer. And the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition requested that we delay it for further consultation to extend the time. We did delay it for six weeks for further consultation to amend the time. Changes were made. This Bill represents, as the Deputy Premier stated, stringent air quality standards and provisions that exceed standards seen in other jurisdictions. It is the right Bill. I understand that.

Remember, Mr. Speaker, this is about democracy. There is always balance, there is always a thing. But let me be clear to the Honourable Member. The house of which I grew up in is in the BELCO zone. The constituency I represent is in the BELCO zone. I want this Bill to go forward to provide not only relief and stronger protections for my residence and my family, but also for countless other families who may not live around BELCO, because there are other pollutants in spaces, and we need to have strong regulations. The Government has consulted on this, has promised on this, has strengthened the provisions, has taken on board feedback. So, the short answer to the question is no, and we will proceed.

But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that we live in a strong democracy. And I welcome the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition's sharing of their views, sharing their thoughts. The views and thoughts of which they have had have added to the strength of this Bill.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: The Cabinet decided to delay the Bill in regard to the letters of which they had sent to us and the protestation which they have made. We took those on board, strengthened the Bill further and we will be proceeding with this Bill. It is important that we pass this to give the Government the teeth to make sure to enforce these particular matters, as this has been going on for far too long.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.
Second question or supplementary?

QUESTION 2: NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE SOLAR PROJECT

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will go to the second question. And thank you for that answer.

There has been a project going on for some time now, the solar project at the National Sports Centre. And taking into consideration that there have been updates, [we are] just wondering . . . it seems to be lagging on and on. Is the Premier aware of what the complications are in getting this particular project to completion? And I will save [the rest] for a supplemental.

¹**Hon. E. David Burt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question was, Was I aware? I have not received a recent update, but I am happy to try to take any questions and try to answer the best I can.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary.

Considering the fact that this has been a major project going on for some time now—someone said *years* now—we understand that Government was to give . . . has Government had to extend finances to get this project to completion?

Hon. E. David Burt: The Minister of Public Works has said no. I do not have a particular update on that. I am happy to try to get further information. And I have also messaged the Minister responsible for the National Sports Centre, and hopefully he will be able to respond. But I do not have anything specific at this time.

My last understanding was that I do believe that the matters were commissioned. But I am uncertain. So, I will look to see if I can get answers.

The Speaker: Second supplementary or third question?

QUESTION 3: OARRS SETTLEMENT

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. I will go to my third question.

Back in May of 2022 it was announced that a settlement had been made with Oarrs. And two years now we still are not aware of how much that settlement was with Oarrs. I am wondering if the Premier could let us know what the settlement with Oarrs was, considering many people are asking the question. This company may have been debt-collecting, in their estimation acting illegally as a company. And understanding that the former Finance Minister put it to task and they were, for that particular contract, put out of

business. So, can the Premier tell us how much that settlement was?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, it would seem as though the OBA are coming up with some very old questions to try to get me to a space where I say, *I do not have that information in front of me*. I can assure you that, despite my copious prep for Premier's Questions, that is not something that is inside of my particular matter. That matter was not handled while I was the Minister of Finance, so I do not have direct knowledge of it. I do know that there was a particular settlement. I will seek to get the particular information. But I am reasonably certain those things may have been declared. And if they are not subject to any agreements, I will make sure that that information is shared.

But I seem to remember that back when this was done, I am reasonably certain it was reported in the public domain. But as I said, Mr. Speaker, I do not have that information despite all of my preparation for the questions of which I thought the Opposition may come with today.

The Speaker: Supplementary or—

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Supplemental.

I recognise that Government does not go into court settlements too often. So, who was the Minister in May of 2022, Finance Minister?

Hon. E. David Burt: I was the Minister of Finance in May 2022. That much I can assure you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: Your second supplementary.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Supplementary.

So then considering the fact that not too many settlements are made in court by the Finance Minister, would he consider that a bit odd that he does not remember what the settlement would be?

The Speaker: Premier.

²**Hon. E. David Burt:** Mr. Speaker, what I will say is that he is saying it is May 2022. I know that I was not dealing with this particular matter in my time. But as I have undertaken to try to get information, I am sure there are technical officers who are listening who might get information for me.

¹ [See additional answer on page 310](#)

² [See additional answer on page 310](#)

**QUESTION 2: NATIONAL SPORTS CENTRE
SOLAR PROJECT**

[additional answer]

Hon. E. David Burt: But in response to an earlier question, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport has responded. The project is 100 per cent complete. It is not completely turned on, but they are seeing significant energy savings at the National Sports Centre.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I think you have asked your two supplementaries and your three questions. So, thank you for your questions, Opposition Whip, on behalf your Leader.

The next Member who has questions is MP Campbell.

MP Campbell, would you like to put your questions?

**QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT HOUSE,
COMPLETION OF WORK**

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

Mr. Speaker, given that the current Governor is soon to depart, and we are expecting to have a new Governor, I was wondering if the Honourable Premier can provide us with an update on the works at Government House and the expected completion date of those works. Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: That, Mr. Speaker, is one that I did prepare for. And I received a recent update on that particular matter. I know that the bid went out for the replacement of the roof, the contract. I know that the tenders were received. I believe the contract has been executed.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Mm-hmm.

But I know that that matter is progressing. I cannot give the specific completion date, but I know that that matter was funded inside of this year's significant capital budget, which was the highest in the last 16 years. And I do know that that particular matter is progressing insofar as the replacement of the roof. Which is the main thing, to ensure that the building is watertight.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

If I can switch to the current residence or the temporary residence where the Governor is residing.

Can the Premier provide us with the length of the lease on that property?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: The lease on that property is until next November.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Vance Campbell: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Can the Premier provide us with the current rent on that property and what was the previous rent being paid on that property?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to give an exact number that may be incorrect. The Minister of Public Works said he is not sure of the exact number. But unquestionably it is a significant property and a significant rent, as it must be for the Governor of the country.

The Speaker: Okay.

You used your one question and two supps already. Thank you for your participation.

The next question this morning for the Premier is from MP Swan.

MP Swan, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: BERMUDA'S ECONOMY UPDATE

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

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition continues to speak negatively about our Island's current state specifically in relation to Bermuda's economy, with one MP recently being quoted as speaking of our Island's impending *economic collapse*. Can the Premier please provide this Honourable House with a factual update on the state of Bermuda's economy?

The Speaker: Premier.

QUESTION 3: OARRS SETTLEMENT

[additional answer]

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

Mr. Speaker, before I address that particular question, having spoken to the Honourable Member from constituency 21, the former Minister of Finance, it is correct that the settlement was entered under my time as Minister of Finance. So, I apologise for that. However, I was not physically dealing with that matter as it did not happen, but the settlement that did occur did take place underneath my time as Minister of Finance.

I will seek to get the information that the Honourable Member did request. And I will write to technical officers to get it, as I do not actually recall the specific details of what was done there. So, I just wanted to make sure that the record was corrected on that and to reflect on that particular matter after my Member has reminded me of what took place. Is that helpful? All right, great. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the question because it is particularly interesting that on any given day we will hear quotes such as, "Meanwhile, the country's very foundations are being eroded, leading not only to loss of life but also to an impending economic collapse . . ." And, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. Today we unveiled a path to repay this country's debt. Today, Mr. Speaker, we stated and made it clear that we will deliver a balanced budget. Today [we tabled] a Pre-Budget Report which records that the Government has collected \$100 million more of revenue this year as compared to the same period last year while also being \$65 million ahead of last year's fiscal performance.

So yes, we understand that the Opposition may have a political imperative to try to put in baseless narratives of doom and gloom, but the facts, Mr. Speaker, tell a different story.

Let us look at the facts, Mr. Speaker. An expanding and growing economy, 8.7 per cent real GDP growth in quarter 2027. Mr. Speaker, the GDP growth that Bermuda is experiencing in the Americas is second only to the country of Guyana, which has discovered massive oil revenues. As the Minister of Economy and Labour [says], this growth has been driven by increased trade balances, employment income is up 8.8 per cent, 180 new businesses were registered during the quarter. There was just released from the Bermuda Monetary Authority a statement that insurance registrations are picking up and accelerating. Today one of the largest insurers announced that they are forming a Bermuda-based subsidiary, MetLife. These are real progress and matters that are being made.

I need not speak, Mr. Speaker, about the Fairmont Southampton redevelopment, which is progressing as well. In addition, we have seen cranes return to the City of Hamilton with construction that is going and picking up. And, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to press forward ahead on these particular matters.

So, without question, Mr. Speaker, I certainly reject the baseless narratives. And the Honourable Member is right that what is being put out by the Opposition is not factual, Mr. Speaker. We recognise without question that people are not all feeling the impact. And that is because of global inflation. But what we have been doing is reducing the costs, freezing health insurance premiums on the government side

and doing everything that we can to make sure that we provide relief to persons.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, one supplementary, Mr. Speaker. And I thank the Premier for that answer. I did notice those big birds as I was driving in from the glorious east and was quite taken aback to see them back.

Mr. Speaker, could the Honourable Premier provide further insight into how the Government's strategic leadership, through initiatives like the Economic Recovery Plan and the Economic Development Strategy, has contributed to Bermuda's sustained economic growth and resilience?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the country's strong economic performance is no accident. And it is a result of deliberate planning and leadership by this Government, driven first by the Economic Recovery Plan, which was put together under the auspices of the Honourable Member for constituency 21, the former Minister of Finance, approved by the Cabinet, brought to this House and pressed forward to execution.

Now, have we executed successfully all 33 matters inside of that plan? No, we have not. Are we still pressing forward on them? Yes. Have we executed a significant number of them? Yes. And are a significant number of those things of which we have executed bearing the results of which we are seeing in this economy today? Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. You have to look no further than when you look at something like Google, something that was in the Economic Recovery Plan. Subsidy cables, one of the largest companies in the world, investing in Bermuda. That, Mr. Speaker, is what happens when you put together a carefully thought-out plan, consult with industry and go ahead and execute it.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we built on that with the Economic Development Strategy, which was also brought to this Honourable House, passed by this Honourable House and is being advanced by the Honourable Minister of Economy and Labour. And it is aimed at fostering innovation and entrepreneurship particularly for small and medium-sized businesses. We are retaining what we have, diversifying and growing and making sure that we have fair labour protections and labour rights and also better immigration policies in this country.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the strategies of which we have laid out cover the gamut of what is necessary to continue to build and diversify our economy. We committed to building a fairer Bermuda for all, rebuild-

ing Bermuda with Bermudians at heart, Mr. Speaker, and our economic policies are an example of that. And especially, Mr. Speaker, when you see a record number of Bermudians in international business, unemployment rates at levels not seen for many a time and continued investment in training and retraining, as stated in the Economic Development Strategy to make sure that every Bermudian who wants to work can find a place to work in this economy.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No further questions from the Member.

The next question this morning is from MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your question?

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

Mr. Robert King: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and Honourable Members and the listening public.

An Hon. Member: Here we go.

Mr. Robert King: So.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 1: AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, LACK OF

Mr. Robert King: Mr. Premier, sir. Statements are being made about the health of the economy in Bermuda. And a number of indicators would suggest that that is actually the case. However, when we have not had audited financial statements in quite a long time, how are we or the public to truly believe that this is actually the case?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, just if I may ask the Honourable Member to withdraw that particular statement and question. It is non-factual and the House will record that we did audited financial statements before. And audited financial statements are done. Those audited financial statements come from the Audit Committee, and are reported and tabled in this House.

So, I would ask you to have the Honourable Member withdraw that question. It is false. It is not factual. And he continues to perpetuate false statements to this Honourable House.

The Speaker: Member, the Premier has acknowledged the fact that there are audited statements, and they have been tabled in this House. And your question implied that there had not been any audited statements. So, he is stating that factually the question was in error because audited statements have been tabled in the House already.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, Members, let him talk to the Chair.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Thank you for the clarification, Mr. Speaker.

What I am speaking to, and I will make the point, is that what we are talking about is the health of the country as a whole in terms of the financial, et cetera, in terms of the actual audited accounts across government ministries to make sure that we have an accurate picture of the health of this country.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: The other thing that—

The Speaker: The Premier can answer. It is fine.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, that is supplementary. And he has again demonstrated that he does not understand the way that finances work. Every ministry is audited by the Auditor General in the Consolidated Fund Financial Statements which were tabled in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker. So, the Member cannot get up here and say that we do not have audited financials when we do! They are in the public domain. And the record of this House for the last financial year is currently being prepared and will be tabled when the House returns. That is the fact, Mr. Speaker.

There is a Committee on Audit, which clearly the Honourable Member is not a member of. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, you can consider putting him there so he can get learned up and understand the way that this stuff works in this Honourable House.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Scott Pearman: The Honourable Premier is misleading the House.

The Auditor General has in fact indicated that there are a number of outstanding audited statements including some that go back 10 years, including the seized assets fund. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, so we are clear, the Honourable Member who asked the question asked about audited statements for the Government of Bermuda. We understand on many different bodies . . . But let us just be clear. When we had outstanding statements for Bermuda College, over the objection of the Auditor General we changed the law to allow an

external firm to go ahead and complete those audits, and those audits were brought up to date.

So, guess what, Mr. Speaker? The Honourable Member can look forward to further changes in the law so we can make sure we get those statements up to date on the outside bodies.

But on the statements of the Consolidated Fund, which are the revenues and expenditures of the Government of Bermuda, those are done and produced on an annual basis as responsible and necessary by our bondholders, and those are done and completed. The Honourable Member who asked the question, Mr. King from constituency 10, is factually incorrect. And I answered the Honourable Member previously. They can engage in this pattern, and they need to stick to the facts.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

You have one supplementary left.

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

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: He has got a shovel tied to his hands.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members, Members.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: Oh! It sounds like we are inciting violence here.

The Speaker: Members!

QUESTION 2: CORPORATE INCOME TAX

Mr. Robert King: Good morning again, Mr. Speaker.

The Honourable Premier, Minister of Finance, said that we are going to make a debt repayment of \$605 million in 2027. Based on the statement it would appear that the corporate income tax that we are hopeful will bear the fruits that we have anticipated will occupy a large part of that repayment revenue. So, it appears that the corporate income tax, when we do not actually know how much it is going to generate for us, these are projections not actually made on fact. And we do know that international business are very good at protecting assets. Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, true to form, doom and gloom all the time. So while the Premier of the country is engaged in conversation and discussions with members of the OECD, while the international

business community praises the Government of Bermuda for the way in which it has advanced this, while the Minister of Finance has conversation and discussions with the Secretary of the Treasury of the United Kingdom to make sure that we advance these particular matters, we have the Opposition, who are completely misinformed about these matters, trying to throw mud.

Let me inform the Honourable Member. We have projections on how much this would bring in. So, it is *completely incorrect* for the Honourable Member to say that we do not know. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the corporate income tax will go into effect on 1 January 2025. And thirdly, Mr. Speaker, outside bodies have stated that it is entirely conceivable for this country to repay its debt and build up a sovereign wealth fund.

But the question, Mr. Speaker, facing the persons who are listening is, Who do you believe will make sure the investments are in the best interests of the people of this country? The party that is here in Government that has reduced taxes and made sure that we provided breaks to workers, the party that is here that is not going to adopt the approach of which that side takes, Mr. Speaker, and put money and revenues to reduce persons' taxes and invest in health care. Those are things that the people of this country want.

So, for the Honourable Member to say that we are not going to get revenue from the corporate income tax, he is building his own narrative to try to continue to promulgate his falsehoods, Mr. Speaker. But everyone in international business, everyone in the international community and everyone who has knowledge of this—

Mr. Robert King: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: —knows that what he is saying is false, Mr. Speaker. If he asks the question, he should wait for the answer, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Robert King: Mr. Speaker, I did not say that the corporate income tax would not—

An Hon. Member: What's your point of order?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Robert King: No, no, no. He is basically saying that—

An Hon. Member: What is your point of order?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members! Members!

Mr. Robert King: He is misleading the House, Mr. Speaker. He is misleading. There it is. Thank you.

The Speaker: Members.

Narrow on to what is your point. What is your point?

Mr. Robert King: I did not say . . .

The point of order is that he is unintentionally misleading the House. I did not say that the corporate income tax would not result in revenue. My point was that the projected amount of revenue that it is going to bring into this country is an unknown quantity.

The Speaker: Premier, I will give you the opportunity to respond to that.

Hon. E. David Burt: Please allow me to respond to this point of order.

Again, incorrect, false. We have laid out the projections, which have come from the accounting firms that were inside of our budget in 2024/25. It stated that the Government intends to receive \$750 million annually.

But here is the thing, Mr. King. These budget projections—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry, Honourable Member.

—do not even take into account the full amount that is supposed to be received. And, Mr. Speaker, if we receive more, as I said in my statement, those payments will be accelerated.

But here is what is interesting, Mr. Speaker. We remember the debates and the discussion around, *Oh, we are putting in place this corporate income tax, and companies are going to leave.* Can I tell you, Mr. Speaker, the Government is seeing the exact opposite. The Ministry of Finance has had to hire persons in the Registrar of Companies to process the additional applications of companies that are coming into Bermuda due to the stability of this tax of which we are put in, Mr. Speaker. That is the reality.

[Desk thumping and cheers]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, Members!

The Member has completed his allotted questions. The next question this morning would be from MP Jason Wade.

MP Wade.

Mr. Jason Wade: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Members! Members!

QUESTION 1: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AND CHILD DAY CARE ALLOWANCE, UPDATE ON HOW FAMILIES HAVE BENEFITED

Mr. Jason Wade: Mr. Speaker, could the Honourable Premier please provide an update on the Government's efforts to enhance Bermuda's Financial Assistance programmes, particularly the recent expansion on the Child Day Care Allowance support. How have these reforms impacted Bermudian families?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, before I answer this question, I want to certainly pay tribute to that Honourable Member, who I know has been in his constituency putting forward matters that are related to this. And when I say that, I know that that Honourable Member has gone around his constituency to ensure that persons are taking advantage of this particular child day care assistance.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in response to the question that the Honourable Member raised, the Government's reforms to the Financial Assistance programme have delivered tangible benefits to Bermudian families. Last week we heard from the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors that the expansion of the Child Day Care Allowance programme which was passed by this Honourable House saw the number in the last fiscal year move from 115 families up to 264 young people, Mr. Speaker. That is more than double the number of families who have had access to this particular assistance.

But I think what is also important, Mr. Speaker, is that the changes that were made to the Financial Assistance programme, [which] were personal employment plans and others, and also the improving economy have also shown other positive stats from that particular report. What is important to note is that for able-bodied unemployed, those numbers have also dropped. For persons who are earnings-low on financial assistance, those numbers have also dropped. And that means, Mr. Speaker, that we are certainly making progress on this.

What we said when we came into Government is that we are going to reform Financial Assistance to make it fairer, to make it a path to work and to expand the benefits to make it fairer certainly for persons [receiving] child day care [benefits]. It was an unfair system, and I think it is important that Honourable Members remember, Mr. Speaker, that the OBA cut child care assistance to persons, *cut* child care assistance. And if you made a dime over [\$55,000], you could get nothing. We expanded that all the way

up to families with \$132,000, and they are benefiting,
Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you, Premier.

Members, that brings us to a close of the Premier's Questions.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: We now start the period of the normal question period, which begins now. And that is 60 minutes for that period.

The questions this morning are from Statements, we have Members who wish to put questions to the Premier on his Statement this morning. And that first question comes from the Opposition Whip.

QUESTION 1: FISCAL YEAR [2024/25] UPDATE AND PRE-BUDGET REPORT [2025/26]

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

Notwithstanding the potential surplus the Premier spoke of in his Statement, what is the approximate cost of collections to Government concerning all of the reductions that he mentioned that we would foresee coming for 2025/26?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

I will happily refer him to page 6 of the Pre-Budget Report, which was tabled in this Honourable House and should be on the SharePoint system, because I think that it is important to note precisely what is happening. And it says, "For FY 2025/26, the Government is expecting non-CIT revenue to remain stable at \$1.26 billion. Non-CIT revenue will remain stable due to the proposed tax/fee reductions stated earlier in this . . ." (report that I covered inside of my Statement today) "which total an expected \$45 million in tax/fee relief."

If the Honourable Member wants to know the specific provisional allocations for the various amounts of the various reliefs of which I have outlined in my Statement, I am happy to answer that question if he wishes.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary, I guess.

I am looking on page 6. I did not see the \$45 million on there. I do not see that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Page 6?

[Pause]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: What? Oh, that is the Pre-Budget Report. Oh! That is not your Statement. Okay. Okay. Yes, I was looking for it in the Statement, but it is in [the] report. Okay. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any further questions? No further. Okay. All right. Thank you.

Premier, you also have questions from MP King.

MP King, would you like to put your questions?

QUESTION 1: FISCAL YEAR [2024/25] UPDATE AND PRE-BUDGET REPORT [2025/26]

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

I know in the Ministerial Statement, the Premier and Finance Minister talked about zero per cent duty relief for the construction industry. Excellent! Absolutely we are in support of that.

I am also mindful of the fact that reductions in import duties on uniforms and essential goods essentially also received deductions on import duties.

I am wondering also if the Finance Minister and Premier will also give consideration to supporting the retail stores and businesses by providing them with a further reduction in import duties on clothes and other essential items. I know that relief has been given for payroll tax. What I am suggesting is that perhaps the same sort of relief in duty that is afforded to the construction industry might actually help to stimulate the retail service industry in Bermuda, as opposed to having people enjoy greater benefit in shopping abroad.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Again, I am just going to have to try to learn him up a little bit. Because it is important to note when speaking about retail, in the last budget, in our reforms to payroll tax (the broad-based reforms to payroll tax that the One Bermuda Alliance opposed), we reduced taxes to retail establishments, payroll taxes for retail establishments in our first initial budget. We reduced the amount of duty on uniforms and retail. We also extended the concessions for retail establishments to renovate and upgrade their things. We have expanded the tax deferral so that retailers can take advantage of that, Mr. Speaker.

But what is important to note, Mr. Speaker, is that you can only put forward this level of tax reduction. And I want to make sure that the country understands this, Mr. Speaker, that we have delivered a balanced budget before a dime of corporate income tax has been received by this Government.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry. My Members have corrected me. We are delivering a budget surplus before a dime of corporate income tax has been received. And that is because we have reformed our tax system. We have said that persons who make more should pay more. And persons who do not make more should pay less. Eighty-six per cent of residents and, yes, every local business received a tax cut. That includes retail establishments.

On the issue related to construction, Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that many persons do import items. If you have ever done renovations and all of the rest, you may import your windows, you may import your doors. You may do that. And those persons are able to see immediate benefit. And yes, this is going to cost a significant amount of money. But what we must recognise is that affordable housing is the number-one issue that this Government is pressing for and looking to address. And we cannot do it alone. In the Government, we want to give as much assistance to the private sector and others to reduce those costs so that they can go ahead and replace.

And it is important finally, Mr. Speaker, to note that a reduction in replacement costs for building materials can also lead to a reduction in home insurance premiums, as those go up due to replacement costs that may happen from the cost of construction.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

[Pause]

An Hon. Member: Now . . .

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Listen for it.

Mr. Speaker, the supplemental will be this. I am hoping that while the subsequent supplemental question is—

[Laughter]

Mr. Robert King: Will consideration be given to zero per cent taxation import duties on clothing and other items the same way for construction materials?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I will help this Honourable Member to understand the budget process.

As I stated very clearly inside of the Pre-Budget Report, these matters are open for consultation. But let me give a little bit more insight, Mr. Speaker, into the process for putting together a Pre-Budget Report. Because this Honourable Member has stated a particular proposal for which he wants to be included. The Junior Minister of Finance reached out to the One Bermuda Alliance and asked them they if they had any suggestions for inclusion inside the Pre-Budget Report. They said, *Just refer to our former statements of which we made*. And what I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, is that what he just mentioned is not in those former statements.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes. Thank you.

Premier, with this reduction in construction duties, you mentioned that it would be very helpful to many Bermudians, which we all realise. But, Mr. Premier, would you agree that this reduction in construction materials would—

An Hon. Member: Declare your interest.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I will declare my interest.

Would you agree, Mr. Premier, that this would also more than likely create many more jobs for Bermudians in this sector?

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, as covered in my Statement, any time you reduce taxes you spur economic growth and activity. And given the amount of tax reductions of which this Government has placed inside this economy, it is no surprise that we are able, the Minister of Economy and Labour is able, to report significant economic growth as we continue to press forward.

But I will agree with the Honourable Member that the reduction in costs for construction . . . and I want to be clear, Mr. Speaker, this is significant. We are talking about rod, we are talking about tile, we are talking about paint. We are talking about cement. We are talking about concrete. We are talking about all of the things which are necessary as part . . . we are talking about screws and joints and hoists and wood

and all of these things. This is significant, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: But our view is . . . yes, and I am sure that the Honourable Member for constituency 9 is smiling as well.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Vance Campbell: I am always smiling!

Hon. E. David Burt: But what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that this is significant because this is what is necessary to advance the policy directions for the Government. Affordable housing is a critical issue. The remediation of vacant and derelict units, the renovation and upgrade of units to make sure that people can live in a good condition . . . and the government should do everything it can to reduce the costs of that. The one thing that we can do immediately is reduce customs duty. We propose to do that in our next Budget Statement. And we welcome all persons, whether in the construction industry or otherwise, to go to forum.gov.bm to take a look at the Pre-Budget Report, to go ahead, join the discussion, comment, say what you like, say what you do not like, say what we should consider, say what we should not consider. This Government has demonstrated, as in our history, we will take those things on board as we produce the final Budget which will come to this House.

The Speaker: MP King, do you have a second supplementary?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Premier, that brings to a close to Members who had questions for yourself.

We now move on.

Minister of Works. There are questions that a Member would like to put to you, as well.

MP King. Would you like to put those questions?

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Robert King: That is cute.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair. Speak to the Chair.

QUESTION 1: CLOSED SCHOOLS UPDATE

Mr. Robert King: Thank you. Yes. Good day, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the repurposing of schools and the revenues that are being collected from them. The question I have is, How are those monies allocated? Are they going to Bermuda Housing Corporation or are they going to the education programmes? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, first I should say that I have a slight dilemma. You will know that you received two Statements from me for delivery this morning. And I have read the incorrect one.

But let me just say this. So there are two things in it that would be different. One, I pointed the direction of travel in relation to Heron Bay and a grocery store, which is getting slightly ahead of myself. But I will say that gives an indication of the direction of travel. The other omission from the statement that I read that would have been included in the one that should have been read was the fact that Janeiro Tucker will be running a cricket programme from Tatum and will have use of the bottom floor of Tatum. Now in relation to the—

[Inaudible interjections]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: In relation to the question that was asked about revenue from schools. Any revenue from schools, whether they are open or closed, goes into the consolidated fund.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary?

Oh. Okay. Thank you.

Minister, that was the only question for you this morning.

The next Statement that has a question this morning is from the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. MP King would like to put a question to you.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: MP, you have the floor.

QUESTION 1: NATIONAL SENIORS STRATEGY 2024–2030 “CELEBRATING LIFE AND AGEING WELL”

Mr. Robert King: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Regarding the senior strategy, the question I have is, Who is going to provide oversight and accountability for the senior strategy to make sure it achieves its aims?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I did speak of this in the Ministerial Statement. So if we just opened our ears and listened a little bit.

An Hon. Member: Oh, no!

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: It is always worth repeating. It is always worth repeating if it is good stuff.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I just mentioned that there will be a programme manager hired. And that the Ministry Youth, Social Development and Seniors will be responsible for making sure the different ministries' organisations follow through on the action items in the National Senior Strategy. Thank you.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
What is the budget that is going to be allocated to the Senior Strategy implementation?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to that Member for asking that question.

As with any strategy that is put forward to the country, these are strategies or action items that have already been en train. As the project goes along, Mr. Speaker, the budget requirements will be added as they go along. It is very difficult to predict what those accounting figures will look like going forward because we know that things change, and things evolve. But definitely going forward, we cannot discount the fact that significant investment will follow how we proceed with the National Senior Strategy.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Mr. Speaker.
So, is it my understanding that the Senior Strategy, strategic plan, does not include an actual budget for the services that are being suggested? Thank you.

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I always wonder when the Opposition asks questions like this, where are they living?

We come to this House many times, Mr. Speaker, indicating how we spend our money, particularly as it relates in the social sector, as well as our

seniors. We do this every year when we come to Budget Debate as well. We would know that we have spent a significant amount of money as it relates to care support for our seniors. A significant amount of money as it relates to health insurance for our seniors, Mr. Speaker. A significant amount of money as it relates to how our seniors get pension increases every year, Mr. Speaker. A significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned last week in regard to the support that we give through financial assistance, Mr. Speaker.

This information is in the public domain. I ask, Mr. Speaker, that that Member who is asking that question do his research to see what the Government has spent on financial programmes, services. I can go on and on, Mr. Speaker, in regard to how Government provides for our seniors. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Member, you used your two supplementaries. Do you have a second question? Okay, thank you.

Minister, that completes the questions for you this morning.

We have questions for a further Statement that is by the Minister of Transport. Minister MP Pearman would like to put questions to you.

MP.

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

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, thank you. I am glad to see the Premier says he has not heard from me. He might have forgotten my point of order when I said he was misleading the House.

The Speaker: MP Pearman, put your question.

QUESTION 1: AIR SERVICE DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Mr. Scott Pearman: Honourable Minister, thank you. In your Statement today you identified that increased airlift to our Island is (quote) "critical." And we agree. You identified available seats in 2018 as being 611,000. You identified that last year, 2023, we had 433,000. That is a difference of 145,000. So there were 145,000 fewer seats last year versus 2018. What new routes and/or new flights do you see filling that gap, closing that gap of 145,000 available seats?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, let me make it very clear that not only do we see as far as filling that gap, but we also see the position of increasing that gap as far as the number of more airline lifts coming in, as we have continued to have discussions. But as

the Southampton Princess, once it comes on board, and other hotels come on board, we will see more need and demand for airlift.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you, supplementary.

In relation to filling that 145,000 gap, you said on page 7 of your Statement that you had discussions with British Airways. Is there any scope for expansion in the number of days that they fly or the routes that they fly or the seats on those planes?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, the discussions are still going on. But we hope to have that.

The Speaker: Second supplementary?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Second supplementary.

I wish you well in the discussions.

And my second supplementary is, in relation to the British Airways flights as currently exist, does the Honourable Minister have any indication as to whether or not those flights might return so they dock at the gate of the airport as opposed to being bussed in on a regular basis?

The Speaker: Minister.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am seeing a quizzical look. I meant the Heathrow site.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been asked to repeat the question.

The question is, During your discussions with British Airways, is there any indication as to whether or not we might see a return to where the British Airways flight from Bermuda to Heathrow docks at an arm into the airport rather than docking and taking the buses?

Thank you.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, that is a discussion we are also having with them. So, we will tell some more better decisions in the future regarding that but . . . exactly what you mean by that.

The Speaker: Okay.

Second question?

Mr. Scott Pearman: No second question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

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

We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper. Let me reset the clock here.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member like to make a—
Premier.

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

Mr. Speaker, I will start on a happy note first. I would like—as strange as it is for me to extend congratulations—to extend congratulations to Skyport. I wish to extend my congratulations for the amazing choir contest that they have organised. And I will associate all Honourable Members because I know Honourable Members hopefully from both sides attended. But I know that a number of Honourable Members and Ministers did attend this particular event, Mr. Speaker. So for that I want to certainly congratulate them for what they did

And I certainly want to (how would I say?) take privileges to congratulate the Northlands Primary School on winning the award, in addition. I know the Honourable Member for constituency 3 would hate for me not to mention the combined East End Primary and St. David's Primary, who had a wonderful presentation last evening as well. Which featured my great-nephew and also the Honourable Member's granddaughter, who won the People's Choice Award. And I do believe the Berkeley Institute [BI] beat out the Bermuda Institute to win the High School Award.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, they did. BI lost.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: But, Mr. Speaker, it was without question a great, great, great event.

The final matter which I would like to cover today, Mr. Speaker, is I would like to ask all Honourable Members to be associated with these condolences. Last week the Progressive Labour Party family, but also many of us, lost a matriarch in our community. Mrs. Barbara Lucille Brown passed away. She was in her 93rd year. She was the mother of our late colleague and Minister, Walton Brown. Also the mother of DeVerne and Deanna and Charles Brown, and one other son whose name is—

The Speaker: George.

Hon. E. David Burt: And George. Thank you very much. It slipped from my head.

And I just wanted to make sure to express condolences on behalf of certainly this side. But I do not want to be partisan on this, and I will extend it to all Honourable Members. She loved listening to the House of Assembly. She would listen to the House of Assembly every Friday religiously. I remember her daughter, whenever I would see DeVerne, she would always tell and share. So I just wanted to extend the condolences on behalf of the government to her family, Mr. Speaker, as many of them have worked for the government, worked with the government and continue in that service. And certainly wish them peace during this time of mourning.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

MP Foggo, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Yes. Sorry. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: Even though the Premier has stolen some of my thunder.

[Laughter]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: But firstly, let me express condolences to the Furbert-Anderson family. Last week I failed to mention that . . . I would like to associate Member Kim Swan and Member Renee Ming, who is a family member to her cousin who passed away at quite a young age last week or week before last. It would have been remiss of those of us from the east to not at least extend condolences in this House to those families.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be associated with the condolences that went out to the late Mr. Quinton Butterfield. I think condolences went out last week.

The Speaker: That is correct.

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: And I want to be associated with those condolences. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, please let me associate myself to the congratulatory remarks made by the Premier regarding the schools who did participate in the sing-off, and the finalists for each category. They again did a superb job and acquitted themselves extremely well when they entertained us yesterday evening at the L. F. Wade International Airport. What stood out is that each of the winners, once they had won, added to their programmes and just it gave it a slightly different twist. But nonetheless, it was still as memorable as

their original occasion when they sang a week or two weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, I also . . . well, I had congratulatory remarks for the St. David's Primary School who had their play. A phenomenal job. I would like to associate my sister Member, the Minister Furbert from constituency 4. She, like myself, was in attendance. Nothing but accolades for the performance that we witnessed.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo: All right. I am sorry. I did forget to associate the Minister of Education.

They did a phenomenal job. It should be, rightly so, highlighted in this House today.

So on that note, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Foggo.

MP Richardson, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Good morning, Mr. Speaker and to those in the listening audience.

I hope it is not a shock to everyone, but I want to start on a very, very sad note. That is to extend condolences to the family of Ms. Tirena Robins, or Tirena Belboda. She was a police officer for a very long period of time. I knew her from 1981 when we first became police cadets. And I associate Minister Tinee [Furbert] with that.

An Hon. Member: Myself.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Just a tremendous, tremendous friend I have known for quite a while. She was, actually I would say, a creative before we started calling people *creatives*. Very, very artistic, very, very committed. Very family oriented and very, very consistent. Also a businessperson. As a female person, quite surprisingly, had a water truck business and the ice cream truck which we were going to be driving together. But so be it.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Associate myself.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Yes, I associate MP Ianthia Simmons-Wade also.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also acknowledge on a very positive note, this person is very, very committed. A very high level of stamina. He actually went aged 80 years old on December 3. He has tremendous service to Bermuda. He was actually one of Bermuda's . . . well, not "one of," but Bermuda's first netball referee, believe it or not. Or netball coach. And that is none other than Mr. Roddy Burchall, very well known, very well known. And he was also granted recognition for

46 years of service in the Special Court, Mr. Speaker. I associate the whole House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say (I know my time is not going to run out real quick) that the Bermuda Health Care System has been tremendously blessed. Tremendously blessed because there is a young lady who is Bermuda's newest nurse. She went to school in the UK, assisted with a government scholarship and others. She went to Coventry University. She now has a BSc [Bachelor of Science] degree in adult nursing. She is mommy to Mr. Sato. Her name is Ms. Dejhah Simons, Burgess-Simons. She is my niece. She is actually flying back today, and so I want the whole of Bermuda to congratulate her. She went through a lot of challenges, but she stuck to it, Mr. Speaker.

And the last person I want to commend today is, we do this thing in Bermuda whereby we meet many, many people. On one of my early morning walks, at about 6:00 am, I did meet Mr. Albert Carter. Mr. Albert Carter is a former employee at Summerhaven. He used to drive the bus quite a bit. He limps a bit. But before 6:00 am, he walks from where he stays over to Summerhaven to assist the young men who are there. He also assists them with what they do to generate income and keep themselves busy. They actually stuff a lot of the envelopes on behalf of Government. So I see him moving along, shuffling along. I tell him he has got to wear a high-visibility vest. But he goes there every day. And Ms. Simmons, who is current matron there, also commends him because he comes consistently and assists all of those who are there and is an inspiration at age 75. I will give him an early birthday [greeting]. His birthday is on January 1. So congratulations. Everybody, thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

[Timer chimes]

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to have congratulations sent to a few people. First of all, Mr. Bob Corrao from Glebe Hill and Tucker's Town, who singlehandedly initiated the resurrection or saving of the Bermuda Goodwill Golf Tournament, of which I owe a great deal of my life to, during COVID-19. He did not let it die because it is the oldest continuous event, when he only had about eight participants. He leveraged his knowledge of . . . of . . . and friends around the world to keep this event. This year, this week he had over 200 people on Island playing three courses simultaneously at Tucker's Point, Belmont and Port Royal. A huge congratulations to him because it is the model that we need to follow of bringing events that provide

tremendous economic input from areas and the demographic that spend and enjoy a Bermuda holiday experience.

Mr. Speaker, I would like letters sent to a Mr. James Robinson, the CEO of Cactus Ltd, one of my golf students when he first came to the Island. He started this company that operates in the space of international business today. Last week he reached out to me and said he wanted to do something for junior golf. I encouraged him to do it through the schools. This morning he handed me two cheques, one for East End Primary and one for Dalton Tucker, schools that I have been involved with through golf, to be able to do outreach to young students to introduce them to the game of golf.

Thank you, Mr. James Robinson, for that outreach.

He has done other things with some of my students to introduce them to his world. He is an academic and a very good gentleman as well, who has Bermuda at heart.

And finally on the same vein as MP Richardson, I would like to have a letter of congratulations sent to Ms. Zaria Trott, one of my constituents, a single mom who applied herself and whilst being a single mom, educated herself further and now has the designation of a registered nurse. And we look forward to her in 2025 entering into the nursing profession at the hospital. These are the types of stories that are great, because it shows persons that, notwithstanding your circumstances, you can apply yourself and chip away and move forward. And she is a great role model for young people and she is a great . . . and her family and friends, like I, are very proud of Zaria Trott, whose father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Lynwood Trott are St. Georgians.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Minister Caesar, would you like your three minutes?

Hon. Crystal Caesar: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Crystal Caesar: Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak on something positive that has happened in our community with some young people, specifically the three female recipients of grants from the Bermuda Arts Council: Ms. Johnae Tucker is studying acting at the London School of Musical Theatre. In addition, Ms. Honor Minors is studying dance at the Boston Conservatory at Berklee. And Ms. Vidya Cannonier Watson is also studying dance at the Tring School for the Performing Arts. Mr. Speaker, as you know, in another life I was somewhat of an artist, a dancer. So these types of things I am really happy to see. And I

want to say congratulations to these young women for their awards.

And while we are on the arts scene, I would also like to congratulate the Department of Culture for opening the MakerSpace up at the CedarBridge Academy with the help of the Education Minister; the Minister who sits in another place obviously, the substantive Minister of the Ministry [of Tourism,] Culture [and Sport]; and the Chairwoman of CedarBridge and the school president. I attended the opening and was quite impressed with the space. I encourage young people and artists of any age to take advantage of this space, as it is a rarity that anybody can provide this opportunity for them to hone their craft.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to say congratulations, but also a sorrowful goodbye to the Director of the Department of Culture, Dr. Kim Dismont-Robinson, She has moved on, another career move. She is no longer with the department. She actually retired last week, but she has not gone too far. She will be at the Bermuda College. But we want to thank her for her years of service. She gave 15 years before becoming the Director as the Folk Life Officer at the department. And I associate the Deputy—the whole House.

The Speaker: Associate the whole House.

Hon. Crystal Caesar: I associate the whole House. And I thank her very much for her contributions to the arts scene and culture in Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam President.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Pearman, would you like your three minutes?

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

Mr. Speaker, on a sad note I would like to offer condolences to the Gray family on the loss of Ms. Gillian Gray in her 86th year. Ms. Gray will be known by some as the wife of Allan Gray, who of course was the person who brought—and I am being asked by the Premier and indeed the Deputy, the whole House to associate. She was the widow and wife of Allan, who brought Orbis to these shores, a business that has done untold good for our Island and enjoys and employs a high degree and number of Bermudian people. More than that, of course, she was a mother, a grandmother and a great-grandmother. And condolences to her sons Trevor and Will, and also her daughter Jenny.

Just as a personal aside, I had the great good fortune of spending a lunch once with Ms. Gray, probably a decade ago now, and her then-husband Allan when he was alive. And they were truly remarkable people. Considering the success that Orbis and he had seen in his lifetime, so down to earth and so very

loving of our Island and grateful for the opportunity to have had their businesses flourish here in Bermuda.

Thank you, and condolences to the family.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Members, we are looking at the clock right now timewise. My question is, Are there many more people who would like to give remarks under condolences and congratulations? Well, if there are many more, I would suggest that we take the break at this time and come back. If there were only one, I would take one. But I see more than one hand.

So, Premier, would you like to—

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until 2:00 pm, for lunch.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

The House now stands adjourned until 2:00 pm.

[Gavel]

Proceedings suspended at 12:31 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:04 pm

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members. I trust everyone enjoyed their lunch period and are ready to start another session.

[Gavel]

The Speaker: The House is now in session.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

[Continuation thereof]

The Speaker: For those in the listening audience, when we broke for lunch we were still on the congratulatory and obituary remarks. And I believe there were at least a handful of Members who indicated that they still wanted to contribute.

Who would like to be the first Member?

MP Adams, you have your three minutes.

Mr. Jache Adams: I will not be that long, Mr. Speaker, but I would be remiss if I did not also associate myself with the condolences to [the family of] Ms. Brown, the mother of the late Walton Brown. Well, we have already associated the House. Believe it or not, she was my first constituent whom I saw when I became elected. I remember both her children and

grandchildren recommended that she would be the person whom I would need to speak to on my path. So, she was the first constituent whom I met.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that Ms. Brown had a sharp tongue. She did not pull any punches. She was quite direct and quite honest, but always, always came from a pure and good spirit. So certainly I echo the sentiments of the Premier, who said that she was a matriarch not just to her children, but certainly her wider family in the community as well. So she will certainly be a miss. So again, I just wanted to send my condolences to her family. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP, Junior Minister.

Minister Furbert, would you like to make a contribution?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I also would like to be associated with the remarks for Ms. Brown. Again, like we heard already, a Progressive Labour Party die-hard actually. I just saw a recent video of her. Her granddaughter recorded her speaking about a particular issue, and she had on her PLP shirt. So, I want to offer my condolences to the family of the late Walton Brown's mother, as well as Deanna, DeVerne, Charlie and George.

I also want to send condolences, Mr. Speaker, to the families of three of my constituents who have recently passed. Mr. Speaker, I believe it was mentioned in the House last week, Friday. I want to make sure that I associate my condolences, and that is Mr. Albert Dale, Mr. Speaker, as well as more recently, Ms. Caroline Wills. And also, Mr. Speaker, Ms. Barbara Flint. Condolences to the families of three of my constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to take the opportunity, and I know it has already been mentioned, in regard to the Skyport School Carol-Off. I want to particularly point out the music teachers who were responsible for the outcome of the carol-off and the performances of the children who performed in the carol-off. And just wanting to say that they did an exceptional job, and we should be so very proud of all of our students who participated in that carol-off. And if you attended—Mr. Speaker, if you had the opportunity to attend, you definitely left that event feeling proud to be a Bermudian. As many of the pieces that were shared were lyrics particularly based on Bermuda. And it is good to see that cultural element being entwined into what our children are learning as it relates to the music and musical appreciation and industry. So I just want to share my sentiments in regard to the carol-off. Well done to everyone!

And also again, very impressed by the Christmas play that was put on by St. David's Primary that I got to attend. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member?

MP Tyrrell.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to be associated with the condolences sent for the Brown family. I did not know Ms. Brown quite well, but certainly I was a lot more familiar with her sons, whom I had much time with. So, I certainly want to send condolences to them.

Mr. Speaker, on a more pleasant note, I want to ask for congratulations to be sent to Stacia Williams, who is actually the niece of one of our strongest supporters of our Premier and the Progressive Labour Party. Stacia has just passed her CPCA [Continued Professional Certification Assessment] exams with high marks. I associate MP Swan. She was highly congratulated by the CPCA of Bermuda. She has a very, very bright future. And I think she is going to make her mark in Bermuda. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Whip.

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

MP Caines.

Mr. Wayne Caines: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Mr. Speaker, I would like to give congratulations to Aaron Spencer, Jr. Mr. Aaron Spencer is a young Bermudian who just returned home from university, and he has passed the CPA exams. And he did it the first time around; he was successful in passing the CPA exams. I would like for a letter to be sent to him in congratulations, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Wayne Caines: Absolutely. Actually, he is following in his father's footsteps.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to congratulate Pastor Leroy Bean. Pastor Leroy Bean has recently earned his doctorate, Doctor in Philosophy Degree in Counselling and Psychology with a concentration in trauma and crisis counselling from Regent University in July 2024. So, congratulations to

Pastor Bean. The House would like to be associated with that as well, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to also, Mr. Speaker, give condolences to [the family of] Ms. Margot Cox. Ms. Margot Cox, Mr. Speaker, was one of my constituents. She was in her mid-80s, just a fantastic lady, Mr. Speaker. I went to knock on her door, and the first time I knocked on the door she said, *Mr. Caines, don't worry about it. You've not got my support. I am an OBA member through and through.*

[Laughter]

Mr. Wayne Caines: And we over the years developed such a rapport. I would come, we would take our Christmas basket, spend time with her. And she would say, *Mr. Caines, I must tell you I'm liking you more and more. But I'm still an OBA supporter.* And we would have a laugh, and we would have a joke.

And most recently, she had some difficulties. And she now rests in our Savior's arms. It was such a beautiful relationship. She would put some bumps on me every time she saw me. But we developed a really, really brilliant rapport together.

And sometimes people do not understand that you can be on different sides of the aisle, but still have mutual love and respect for each other and still work on behalf of one of your constituents. She has left to mourn Ian and Brian, her sons. It was such a beautiful going-home ceremony. And I would just like to, on behalf of my family, offer condolences to the Cox family.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to first off with condolences to the Francis family on the passing of their matriarch, Ms. Gloria Francis of Newcastle Lane, which is just off of Hermitage Road. Ms. Francis was the mother of Wanda and Velda. Velda was a Francis; she married a Johnston.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to give congratulations because we have a young Bermudian lady who is actually running in UK, not necessarily in Parliament, but to be a councillor (I think that is the term), Ms. Jahdia Spencer, who is a product of The Berkeley Institute and other public schools. But she has worked herself very well into the Labour Party in the UK. And now she has been nominated to run as a councillor in the election next week.

Now on that note, Mr. Speaker, while I have the undivided attention of my cousin here, I want to congratulate The Berkeley Institute for out-singing, outwitting—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you. I did not get a chance to listen to them.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Wayne Caines: [The Honourable Member] is inadvertently misleading the House, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: They won!

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

So, I just want to congratulate The Berkeley Institute and all Berkeleyites, once again showing that green and gold work together to beat everybody else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other—
Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes.

Just a brief association, Mr. Speaker, with the condolences given to the mother of our late colleague, Walton Brown. Certainly, for the PLP, Walton's spirit is still with us in many ways because he was such a strong advocate and thought leader within the PLP for a long time. And certainly, all of the Members on this side will be associated. But I must say, Walton was somebody who actually took pride in reaching to the other side and across the aisle. So, it would be appropriate to associate the whole House. Because that was his spirit, that was his philosophy. That is what he lived by even though he was passionate in green and white. He did see the value of outreaching and building rapport with others whom he did not necessarily share opinions with. And certainly, he was somebody who was very important to us as a PLP family, as you would know.

And his mother emulated and represented that, her strong passion for politics. And their own family heritage in connection with progressive politics goes back multiple generations before Walton, as one would know his family history with his grandfather and with other family associations. So, he comes from a very progressive political heritage. And his mother emulated that all the time—all the time, as does his family. So, condolences. I just want to be associated with that comment about his dear departed mother, who was certainly special to the PLP family. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

Does any other Member?

MP [Rev. Dr. Emilygail] Dill, you have the floor. Those hyphens got me mixed up that time. Go ahead.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Good afternoon. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to offer some condolences on the part of, there have been several individuals in our constituency, constituency 36, who have passed over the recent weeks. And I would like to offer condolences and ask if letters can be sent to the families.

I will start with Mr. Kenneth Bremar. He was an individual who was raised in the Dockyard community. But he gave invaluable service to Bermuda, to the golf courses in particular, as one of their lead mechanics. And we offer condolences to his family. He passed in the UK.

Another individual who passed who was a resident is Mr. Kyle Smith, who was the son of one of our executive members in the Sandys North area.

We would also like to offer condolences to the family of Mr. Michael Phillips, the former policeman; to the family of Cosette Durrant, one of our former educators; and to the families of Frances Johnson and Janice Durham.

On a happier note, I would like to share birthday greetings to three individuals in our constituency who celebrated their 80th birthdays over the last couple of days. Judith Coffey, Cecil Smith and Ronald Boyce. They have all recently celebrated birthdays.

And last but not least, I would like to offer congratulations to Dr. Eugenia Robinson-Lobban, who celebrated 25 years of her work in Restoration House Ministries. And I would like to commend the work of Dr. Robinson-Lobban because she has worked assiduously. She has run a school for students who are at risk and just provided invaluable support to this community both in education and the religious field. So, I just want to say congratulations and thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member? Any other Member?

Mr. Whip . . . no, I already called on Mr. Whip. I saw you up for a second time there.

No other Members.

Before we move on, I would just like to add a couple of comments to the remarks that have already been expressed. But first of all, I would like to ask the House to join me in the one that I am about to do first. And that is to ask you to join me in sending birthday congratulations to Ms. Izetta Harvey, who is one of the Progressive Group which is well known for their efforts.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: She will be turning 99 tomorrow if memory serves me correctly. I would like for her to

know that this House is recognising her for her milestone in age and looking forward to being able to again next year when that real milestone comes about. But this whole House sends happy birthday wishes to Ms. Harvey.

Also, the congratulations that were sent to young Aaron Spencer, I would like to be associated with those remarks as well.

And on a sad note, I would like to be associated with the remarks to the Brown family. I had known Ms. Brown since my teenage years when her daughter and my good friend, Randolph, were all hanging together on many occasions spending time in the household. And Ms. Brown whom you all described today is the Ms. Brown whom I knew as a teenager. She was always forthright and never bit her words. She let you know where she stood. She will surely be missed by her family and the community in general who knew her.

Also, the remarks that were expressed to the Johnson family on the passing of Ms. Frances Johnson, I would like to be associated with those.

And I would also like to have condolences sent to [the family of] Mr. Keith Tacklyn, to his family. Mr. Keith Tacklyn, for those of you who do not know, was the son-in-law of the lady sitting in our Gallery here this afternoon, Ms. Lister. So, there is a family connection to us all. And we ask that condolences be sent to his wife, his children, his siblings. And they recently buried their mother not too long ago as well. So, there is double sadness for the family. So, we would just like the House to join us in those condolences.

Thank you very much.

Now we will move 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

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: For the listening public, the first order of business this afternoon is the second reading of the Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024, in the name of the Junior Minister of Finance.
Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.
Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Any objections to that?
There are none.
Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

CORPORATE ENTITIES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present the Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 to this Honourable House. This Bill proposes amendments to several corporate laws, namely, the Companies Act 1981, the Limited Liability Company Act 2016, the Exempted Partnerships Act 1992 and the Overseas Partnership Act 1995. And these changes are necessary to support the implementation of Bermuda's new corporate income tax [CIT] regime which begins January 2025.

Mr. Speaker, last year Bermuda introduced the Corporate Income Tax Act 2023 following global efforts by the OECD and G20 to address tax fairness. Specifically, these organisations set a minimum corporate tax rate of 15 per cent for large multi-national groups to prevent tax avoidance. Bermuda's corporate income tax regime is designed to meet these international standards ensuring we remain compliant with evolving global tax expectations.

Mr. Speaker, to effectively enforce and manage the CIT system, the Corporate Income Tax Agency was established in June of this year. The agency will handle all aspects of the tax process including filing tax returns, ensuring compliance and of course collecting said taxes. In preparation for this, the Ministry of Finance conducted a public consultation in August of this year where stakeholders made it clear that they wanted a simple and efficient system that minimises administrative burdens.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will streamline compliance for businesses within the scope of the corporate income tax by aligning CIT-

related requirements with existing corporate filing processes. Put simply, these businesses are already required to submit annual filings to the Registrar of Companies. So, to avoid duplication, this amendment proposes to include the CIT registration process as part of their already required annual filings. Companies and partnerships will need to indicate whether they are subject to the CIT, known as Bermuda constitute entities, and provide relevant details such as the name and contact information of their representative.

Mr. Speaker, the Registrar will securely share this information with the Corporate Income Tax Agency to ensure compliance. But the data will remain confidential and will not be made available to the public. Importantly, these changes do not require updates to company IT systems, as existing reporting platforms will remain in use. However, the annual filing forms will be revised to accommodate the new requirements.

Mr. Speaker, the integration of the CIT process with existing filings will make compliance more efficient and reduce administrative burdens. This streamlined approach responds directly to feedback from stakeholders, and by implementing these changes Bermuda continues to work to ensure compliance with international standards while maintaining a business-friendly environment that prioritises efficiency and transparency. To prepare businesses for these changes, the Ministry issued a communication in November outlining the details and providing guidance on what to expect. This reflects our commitment to supporting the industry and ensuring efficiency as we transition to the new tax system.

Mr. Speaker, with these amendments, Bermuda is taking another important step toward creating a transparent, efficient and globally aligned corporate tax framework, ensuring that our jurisdiction remains a trusted and respected place to do quality business.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Junior Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

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

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I thank the Honourable Junior Minister for his presentation to the House on this Bill.

Let me start by declaring an interest. I am a member of the law firm that has other lawyers who have advised on this together, doubtless with many other lawyers in Bermuda. So, I declare that interest. I have had no personal involvement, but there are others at my firm.

That being sorted, I have very little to say on this. It is in fact an information-gathering exercise that is now being put into legislation. And specifically and with your leave, Mr. Speaker, I will just quote from the recital: This is “to share the information regarding whether or not an entity is a Bermuda Constituent Entity with the Corporate Income Tax Agency” So what we are achieving here is to prioritise simplicity by leveraging existing reporting requirements to collect the necessary information for the forthcoming corporate income tax. And as the Junior Minister said, it is intended to streamline the process and to avoid duplication.

In practical terms, Mr. Speaker, there are three steps here which will occur. First of all, all entities will forward information to the ROC [Registrar of Companies] (or have already done so, more probably). Secondly, the ROC will share this information with the Corporate Income Tax Agency (CITA). And thirdly, the CITA will then be called upon to determine if any entity is a Bermuda constituent entity for the purposes of the corporate income tax.

So again, repeating the fact that together with the industry stakeholders, the reason for this approach being taken was to streamline the process and to avoid duplication by recreating again that which already does or will exist at the Registrar of Companies.

We support this Bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

None other.

Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for his comments. I think we are all in alignment with that.

So, with that, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Foggo.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 2:30 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CORPORATE ENTITIES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Chairman: Members, we are now in Committee on the Bill entitled [Corporate Entities \(Miscellaneous\) Amendment Act 2024](#).

Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I would like to move clauses 1 through 5.

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

Any objections?

There being none, Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends the Companies Act 1981 to require local companies, exempted companies and to permit companies to forward information to the Registrar as to whether they are Bermuda constituent entities for purposes of the CIT Act.

Clause 3 amends the Limited Liability Company Act 2016 to require limited liability companies to forward information to the Registrar as to whether they are Bermuda constituent entities for purposes of the CIT Act.

Clause 4 amends the Exempted Partnerships Act 1992 to require exempted partnerships to forward information to the Registrar as to whether they are, or will be on commencement of the CIT Act, Bermuda constituent entities for purposes of the CIT Act.

Clause 5 amends the Overseas Partnerships Act 1995 to require overseas partnerships to forward information to the Registrar as to whether they are, or will be on commencement of the CIT Act, Bermuda constituent entities for purposes of the CIT Act.

The Chairman: Thank you, Junior Minister.

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

There being none.

Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move that all clauses be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that all clauses be approved.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 5 passed.]

Mr. Jache Adams: Madam Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Mr. Jache Adams: 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.

Thank you, Junior Minister.

[Motion carried: The Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 2:33 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CORPORATE ENTITIES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

It has been reported.

That moves us to the next item on the Order Paper. That item is the second reading of the Clear Air Amendment Act 2024 in the name of the Deputy Premier.

Deputy Premier, would you like to present your matter?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

BILL

SECOND READING

CLEAN AIR AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Good afternoon to Members.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Bill entitled the Clear Air Amendment Act 2024. The Bill seeks to amend the Clear Air Act 1991 to ensure that Bermuda maintains the highest quality of ambient air.

Mr. Speaker, clean air is the foundation of a healthy society and a thriving natural environment. However, maintaining it requires proactive and adaptive measures, especially when we confront evolving environmental challenges and the proximity of indus-

trial facilities to residential neighbourhoods. Scientific studies and health data increasingly highlight the harmful effects of even low-level exposure to pollutants such as fine particulates, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide and volatile organic compounds.

To provide context, fine particulates are microscopic, particulates that are invisible to the naked eye, but can be inhaled deep into the lungs. In contrast, the larger particulates, such as visible soot, consist of particles of incomplete combustion. I hope people understand the difference there because that is a difference that is very much key to this legislation. These pollutants which can originate from industrial emissions, transportation and waste management facilities not only compromise air quality but also contribute to respiratory illness, cardiovascular diseases and reduced overall life expectancy.

Mr. Speaker, through the Environmental Authority, the Pollution Control section of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (known as DENR) plays a critical role in regulating environmentally significant operations. Each year, DENR issues 629 land-based operating licences for a wide range of what are defined as control plants. These are . . . and the breakdown, Mr. Speaker—as follows:

- 29 aerated sewage treatment plants;
- 43 spray-paint facilities;
- 13 electrical generators operated by BELCO;
- 429 backup emergency electrical generators;
- five incinerators including the Tynes Bay Waste-to-Energy Facility;
- the MediWaste clinical waste incinerator and crematoria;
- 32 fuel storage facilities including retail fuel stations;
- three dry cleaners; as well as
- fuel-powered rock crushers, sand sifters, stone cutters and concrete plants.

The DENR also regulates activities offshore. Each year, the department licenses 135 types of control plants that operate on cruise ships making regular visits to Bermuda. Cruise ships now are like mini-cities, Mr. Speaker. I am sure you are aware. They have everything on them. They have wastewater treatment, desalination. They are not just boats carrying people, they are actually literally self-contained cities. And they have every component of these sort of operations on them. That is why off-shore licensing is done.

Mr. Speaker, as you can appreciate, the scope of the Act is broad and encompasses a very diverse range of operations within its mandate. Mr. Speaker, in addition to its in-house monitoring efforts, the Pollution Control section of DENR ensures effective ambient air quality monitoring by entering into annual contracts with BIOS [Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences]. BIOS manages large air monitoring stations and pole-mounted air quality sensors which are strategically located downwind of various control

plants that emit contaminants—for example, the traffic emissions monitoring station and sensor located on Crow Lane. This year, air quality sensors have been installed at Prospect for Tynes Bay and two other sites. In the coming year there will be new air quality sensors installed at Whitney Avenue for BELCO, Waller's Point Road for the clinical waste incinerator and crematoria, and Cedar Aviation for private jet emissions.

Mr. Speaker, recognising the need to stay at the forefront of environmental protection, the DENR undertook a comprehensive review of the Island's outdoor air quality standards. This review aimed to better align our standards with those of larger and more developed jurisdictions. As part of this process, a thorough evaluation of air quality limited values and target values was conducted, two different types of value systems. It is important to note that limited values are enforceable regulations, [while] the aspirational target values are more stringent but are not enforceable in these jurisdictions. Two very different terms. Some people get them confused, Mr. Speaker, which is why it is important that we wanted to separate them out. Because of numerous publications of guidelines and other issues around air quality, they mention things, and people do not understand that there are differences—things that are aspirational and things that actually can be measured and enforced.

Based on review, a range of ambient air quality limited values was proposed for fine particulates, nitrogen oxide, sulphur dioxide and volatile organic compounds, and other pollutants. These proposed air quality limited values align with predominantly the UK air quality objective target values and with one US National Ambient Air Quality Standard. The proposed limited values for Bermuda, which are based on targets set by other jurisdictions, will be enforceable under the revised regulations, which we will speak about later. Full details will be provided in forthcoming amendments to the Clean Air Regulation 1993, which I intend to present shortly. And they are approved for the affirmative resolution process, so they will come to this House.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to its health implications, air pollution creates significant nuisances that disrupt daily life, such as persistent unpleasant odours. It makes people reluctant to spend time outside or even breathe the air itself, preventing children from playing outdoors and disrupting otherwise enjoyable daily routines. These issues detract from the appeal of neighbourhoods, affecting both residents and visitors. Over time, such conditions erode community well-being and diminish the desirability of places where we live, work and visit.

Mr. Speaker, to address these nuisance odours, specifically emanating from control plants as defined under the Act, the DENR reviewed best practices for many jurisdictions while taking into consideration Bermuda's remote location and relatively small

population size. We have to, in context, Mr. Speaker, understand Bermuda is different. Irrespective of our pursuing the highest standard, we have to shape things for Bermuda and not necessarily just have it exactly as what is done in another jurisdiction. They have to be shaped. Even though the standards will be higher or similar, we have to shape it for Bermuda, right-size for Bermuda like many things governments and others have to do.

The chosen monitoring solution is based on dynamic olfactometry. Using this method, an odorous sample air is diluted with odourless air to the dilution-to-threshold point that the odour cannot be detected by trained inspectors. Based on other jurisdictions, a dilution-to-threshold limit of five parts of odourless air and one part odorous air has been selected as an appropriate limit to apply at the boundaries of residential neighbourhoods to sites operating control plants. If a trained inspector can still detect the odour after a greater dilution than five to one, then it will be considered a nuisance odour. Exceeding two periods of nuisance odour in one year would necessitate an emissions control order being served on the licensee.

Mr. Speaker, the DENR has procured the equipment necessary to monitor nuisance, and three Bermuda government employees have recently been trained as certified in the UK as odour inspectors. And those persons would have been a product of that process that I just described in the previous chapter. Mr. Speaker, proposed amendments to the definitions of control plants have been made to include (1) facilities for the treatment of disposal of manure. This will extend to proposed odour regulations to include aerated manure pits alongside the already regulated aerated sewage treatment plants; and (2) open-air and inflatable spray-paint facilities of vehicles and machinery that are operated on a commercial basis or as a business enterprise. This will ensure that such operations appearing in residential neighbourhoods can be suitably policed.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to odour, other nuisances can also impact the enjoyment of one's property and garden, such as the buildup of grime or other deposits on buildings, services and vehicles. These nuisances can cause physical damage through corrosive and unsightly effects leading to costly maintenance and repairs. Additionally, they create the inconvenience of having to complain to the offending facility to coordinate remediation of the impacts.

Mr. Speaker, large particulate soot is particularly emitted from the BELCO North Power Station engine exhaust stacks, typically twice per month with emissions lasting several minutes. This large particulate soot does not pose an inhalation risk like fine particulate soot, which is emitted during the normal operation of all combustion-based processes. Analysis of over 60 water tanks from properties in the vicinity of BELCO has yet to show any failure to meet primary drinking water standards or guidelines due to the

presence of large particulate soot. However, despite these air and water quality findings, large particulate soot can still have a significant impact on society, diminishing the quality of life and discouraging outdoor activities.

Mr. Speaker, following further consultations with the Attorney General's Chambers, it was determined that issues involving nuisance dust, soot or deposits would be better addressed through a new statutory nuisance order rather than relying on existing powers to manage damage to property. Consequently, it was proposed to incorporate statutory nuisance under the new Schedule of the Bill, enabling the Minister to issue statutory nuisance orders as appropriate. This new statutory nuisance provision will balance public health, environmental protection and community welfare while offering legal tools to resolve conflicts and promote a safer, healthier living environment. These provisions establish a legal framework and mechanisms to address the subjective impacts of pollutants such as dust, soot and other deposits that may settle on nearby properties.

Mr. Speaker, other proposed amendments to the Act include the following:

1. Increasing fines for noncompliance with operating licence conditions from \$5,000 to \$20,000. A new fine of up to \$20,000 will be introduced for failing to comply with a statutory nuisance order in addition to a daily fine of \$5,000 for each day the default continues.
2. Introducing the requirement for an air quality action plan for licences issued with an emissions control order. These plans will require licensees to hold public consultation meetings and provide details of all pollution reduction measures considered, as well as a schedule for implementing remediation measures to address the nuisance.
3. Reducing the opacity limit for smoke emitted from exhaust stacks of control plants from 20 per cent to 15 per cent.
4. Expanding the list of controlled chemicals which require import permits, to support the global transition away from chemicals with environmental impacts and health risks to favour less polluting alternatives.

Mr. Speaker, provisions have been added to the Act to differentiate the different grades of ambient monitoring methods, including US Federal Reference, or equivalent, monitoring stations with their stringent citing requirements, in addition to smaller pole-mounted indicative ambient air monitoring sensors. I am happy to inform this Honourable House that these pole-mounted sensors are being rolled out to seven locations and will serve as a method to screen different sites for consideration of larger monitoring stations.

Mr. Speaker, given the importance of these amendments, I invited the public to comment on the

proposed legislative changes during the initial three-week period commencing [June] 19, 2024. This period was subsequently extended to August 31, providing a total consultation period of 10 weeks. I want to repeat that again, Mr. Speaker, because that is an issue that has come up quite often. Recently it came up in the House in our deliberations. So, I will repeat it. I invited the public to comment on the proposed legislative changes during an initial three-week period commencing June 19, 2024. This period was subsequently extended to August 31, 2024, providing a total consultation period of 10 weeks.

During this time, the DENR also initiated consultations with a number of stakeholders. Of those who responded, DENR held consultation meetings, in-person meetings, Mr. Speaker, with BELCO, AIR-CARE and the Ministry of Public Works. DENR received a total of 40 comments and questions which were considered in the amendments. Details of the proposed regulatory changes along with information on air quality monitoring and other functions of the Pollution Control section were made available on the online government public forum. I want to read that again, as well, because there is some question about the extent or quality of the availability and transparency of this process, Mr. Speaker. Details of the proposed regulatory changes along with information on air quality monitoring and other functions of the pollution control section were made available on the online government public forum.

This forum received 44 comments and questions, which DENR responded to by the end of August. And in some cases, Mr. Speaker, these questions were being answered in real time because the department had a system where, when things were posted, they came up, they were put into a spreadsheet, or they were answered fairly immediately once they were received by the department.

And I am happy to recognise that the Department Director, Dr. Geoffrey Smith, is here. In his previous life he was actually head of the Pollution Control section, which had direct involvement with this process. Dr. Smith is (I am going to do a shameless plug) probably one of the most, if not the most, experienced person in Bermuda in this area. I am glad he works for Government. And I have been happy to have his advice through this whole process. I am thankful he is here, and I am thankful for the work he and his team have done under him in the Pollution Control section.

Additionally, 43 comments and questions were received directly by the Pollution Control section from entities such as Bermuda Environmental Sustainability Task Force (BESTF), the National Trust, MediWaste, Skyport and WEDCO. Submissions received after August 31, 2024—this is a very important point—from the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition *after the date* were also considered in the review process. I hope that has been heard, Mr. Speaker. (I am not going to repeat it, at least not at this point.)

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the consultations, I can confirm amendments were made to the Bill and incorporated in the proposed amendments to the regulations. For example, aerated manure pits were added to the list of controlled plants. There have been a lot of complaints that I have received in my department about certain odours that have emitted from certain farm locations around the Island. I am not going to mention exactly where, but certain farm locations. Certain odours that have become a nuisance and inconvenience to certain neighbourhoods in the community. So now they are going to be regulated. They maintain aeration pits. They maintain certain facilities on their property to deal with the aeration from waste that comes from certain farm animals. So, they are now going to be controlled. They are now going to be regulated. They were not regulated before. And there are a couple around the Island, as you would know, Mr. Speaker. But we are going to make sure that there is proper regulation because of the changing landscape and environment in Bermuda. And the proximities have become closer than years ago.

The Statutory Nuisance Order was introduced. Protocols for the numbers of trained inspectors to assess and determine a nuisance odour were added. Revision of the definition of “spray-paint facilities” to account for lesser-controlled activities appearing in residential neighbourhoods. There has been a long-standing issue with a couple of spray-paint operations around the Island that have a long history of challenges and coming up against neighbours. The law did not appropriately accommodate some of the issues. These matters have even been in the courts. So we are changing statutes to accommodate these situations that are a part of, obviously, a learned experience of the Government over time around these issues. So we are changing the law to fit the different circumstances that have obviously emerged around these types of operations.

Mr. Speaker, the Government’s commitment to protecting Bermuda’s ambient air quality is unwavering. These proposed amendments and coming regulations are vital steps toward a cleaner, healthier environment for all.

Mr. Speaker, with that I now move that the Bill entitled the Clear Air Amendment Act 2024 be now read a second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any Member wish to speak to that?

MP Pearman.

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

As before, I can be relatively brief. This is a Bill which in principle is about clean air. But as we can see from the media reports this morning, is also about hot water. The clean air part is easy. We have got a Clean Air Act 1991 which is being subject to the Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 before us today. As to the

hot water, only this morning there were not one, not two, but three articles in the paper. I am just going to stick to the one that was the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition’s statement. And I do so not by asserting the truth of its content, but just because it airs issues that have been raised by a very prominent public interest group. I know that it is a large group. The Minister and I both attended their meetings over the years. So, I will stick to certain comments that have been made in that statement and will pose certain questions to the Minister because of it.

As to the facts, I will start with this. This amending Act was tabled at short notice with only one week rather than the usual longer period. I know that the Minister in his [brief] to this House speaks to what may or may not have happened back in June. But as far as Parliament is concerned, we got this version of the Bill one week ago on the 6th of December. That is a fact. And that is a different point to the public criticism, but it begs the question, Why does this have to be dealt with today? Why could it not go off to be dealt with after the concerns of the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition are addressed?

As to the public criticism: As I said, there was a statement provided by the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition this morning. With your leave, Mr. Speaker, just a few quotes. They have accused the Minister of (quote), “failure to engage with public feedback.” (end quote) They have accused the Minister of (quote) “a sham” (end quote) consultation process. They have described the consultation as (quote), “nothing short of farcical.” (end quote) And they have said that [the Government] (quote) “systematically ignored substantial input.” (end quote)

Now again, Mr. Speaker, those are not my words. Those are words of the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition. But I will, with your leave again, quote this sentence in their statement: “This [Government’s] pattern of behaviour—soliciting public input only to disregard it, then offering token consultation after decisions have been made—makes a mockery of the consultative process and reveals a lack of commitment to genuine reform.”

So that is the hot water of which I spoke. Doubtless the Minister may wish, when he addresses Parliament after any speeches in the debate, to put right or address those concerns, because they are legitimate concerns from a legitimate section of the public, many of whom are frustrated by the lack of solutions that have been presented in relation to these very real issues. And they are very real issues, and I know the Minister has visited some of these homes. I know I visited some of these homes, and I have seen the roofs and I have understood the situation about water quality and et cetera.

What is a slightly odd suggestion, and I would invite the Minister to specifically respond to this point, is the suggestion by the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition that, in fact, as a result of their statement, the Gov-

ernment offered to meet with them, but only offered to meet with them after the vote in the House today. Now, that may be true; it may not be true. I do not know. But if it is true, it is hard to know why that would make sense. That certainly does not seem like listening. *We'll vote now and decide, and then we'll talk to you.*

And again, I guess the thrust of it is that there does seem to be a rush to get this Bill done. By way of practical example, we do not even have the regulations yet. And I think it is fair to say that the regulations would provide the devil in the detail and that they are not available at this moment in time.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I understand that MP De Silva is offering some learned information on when regulations are supposed to come in relation to legislation. No doubt he can illuminate us all when he takes to his feet later on. The problem for legislators, Mr. Speaker, is how can we vote on something when we do not have a full picture? And so, the absence of the regulations is, at very least, concerning.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Again, I am now getting further chipping-in from MP De Silva, and again no doubt he will share his learning on this matter when he gets up to speak.

So, there are three concerns (or at least distilling this article, which is a very lengthy article, down to three fundamental concerns) that the Minister may wish to address or may not wish to address. But they are public concerns, and therefore hopefully he will. And these are the three points: One is the suggestion in the article that the WHO (the World Health Organization) guidelines are not being met by this amendment. Again, I do not know if that is correct or not, but that is an allegation being put to the Minister by the central group in this area. Is it right that the WHO guidelines are not being met by these amendments? And if it is right, why is that?

The second concerning allegation in the statement from the BCAC (the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition) is that the quality of the monitoring equipment is less than best practice. Again, I do not know if that is correct or incorrect, but that is an allegation being made and certainly one that this Honourable House would wish to have an answer to. Thirdly (again, these are my three points that I pulled out of a very extensive statement), apparently there was an 89-page document that the BCAC took the pains to have produced by people whom they retained, advisors, et cetera. I think they said *scientists* in the article. I may be going a bit far by saying *scientists*, but an 89-page document. And they say that has not been responded to. So, I would invite the Minister to clarify

whether or not it is correct that an 89-page document, firstly, was provided to the Ministry; and secondly, if it is correct, that that has not been responded to.

Mr. Speaker, I said I would be brief, and hopefully I will. But stepping back, I think what we can all agree on is that a comprehensive solution should have come long ago to this very important issue. Particularly to those whom it impacts. I have said before and I will say it again, it does not just impact those in the immediate vicinity of the utility; it actually impacts all of us on the Island.

And I hear that MP Hayward, Minister Hayward, has got a point to make, so no doubt he will say it when he is on his feet. Sadly, it is at least the opinion of a substantial member of the public, a substantial group in the public, that this Bill does not appear to be a comprehensive solution. So, I would invite the Minister to explain whether he would agree with that, and if he does not, why not? And if he does agree with it, then I would invite the Minister to address whether or not it would be better for all concerned to rise and report, to meet with them, to hear their concerns, to respond to an 89-page report if such a report exists. If he does not wish to do that, at least he can address them in the context of this debate.

So again, you have my specific queries. I really would like to know about the WHO standards point because that is of considerable concern on any objective basis. And I would like to know also why not just delay to the next sitting so that we can have a meeting and a response. Time and energy have been put into this by all concerned, including by the Government and its advisors. I would have thought that courtesy deserves a delay and a meeting and consideration.

As to the BCAC's request, they are more broad than mine. They are five bullet points toward the end of their statement. Again, with your leave, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Scott Pearman: They are these:

- They invite the Ministry to immediately postpone today's vote until the legislation is fit for purpose.
- They ask for simultaneous update to both the Clear Air Amendment Act and the Clean Air Amendment Regulations.
- They ask to allow the Bermuda public to view the updated legislation in good time with full public consultation period before it is tabled and debated in Parliament. (Obviously it is now tabled and it is being debated.)
- Fourthly, adoption of WHO guidelines is the minimum acceptable standard.
- And finally and fifth, mandatory implementation of regulatory grade monitoring equipment, which comes back to the question I posed about the quality of the equipment.

I am asked by MP Zane De Silva what I am reading from. I am reading from the statement by the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition that was put out to the public today.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: It was in the paper. I would think that MP De Silva might have been paying close attention to the paper this week, but that is something—

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: I think the Honourable Member may be misleading the House unintentionally, because he said it was put out in the paper today. But he is not reading from the newspaper. It looks like it might have been a document that was presented to him otherwise than through the news.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I can put any concern on the part of MP De Silva to rest. This is my printout from the paper. But because I am an environmentalist at heart, I took the liberty of removing the photographs before printing it to keep it on fewer sheets of paper.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: But there you go. But there we go.

Mr. Speaker, with those questions, both the three specific questions that I posed and the five questions that are posed on behalf of the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition, I welcome further answers from the Bill. Again, I leave the Honourable Minister with a suggestion that perhaps rising and reporting would be the better approach in relation to this very important issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Pearman.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Minister Furbert. You have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a privilege and an honour to be able to speak to this topic, particularly the Clean Air Amendment Bill that is before us that means much to many people in our community, because we all would want to be able to breath in fresh, clean air and be free of pollutants. This issue is so much bigger than BELCO, than the pollutants from Skyport and the airplanes and the private jet facility, and the crematorium and

MediWaste. It goes right down to the cars that we drive in regard to the fumes that come out from our vehicles. Mr. Speaker, it speaks to so much more in our community that we should be concerned about.

My learned colleague just spoke about sharing a full picture. I feel it is important that I rise to my feet to speak to this issue being the representation. Standing on my feet, Mr. Speaker, because I represent a constituency that, when I am on the doorsteps, I hear lots of complaints about pollutants as it relates to the private jet facilities. And the complaints in regard to the odours and the smells, as it relates to the crematorium and what they see in the air. And I see the roofs of many constituents when it comes to soot.

This is a very real issue that we are all living with and we should be on our Ps and Qs about it. We are all living this. This topic has been important to many. When we learn about how many people actually gave input in regard to the consultation, there were many people. I believe Minister Roban has spoken to this. Approximately, I think it was 191 comments or as it related to speaking up for consultation. That is a huge number, Mr. Speaker, because usually when we put documents out in the public domain, sometimes it is even hard to get one. So, this would be huge, you know. This is a topic and an area that concerns many people.

What this Act does is provide more stringent fines. It sets out the ability for plants to have accountability plans. It sets out better monitoring of clean air. Mr. Speaker, what we do not have is the luxury of being able to separate many of our plants as it relates to pollution and putting them somewhere on another island. That would be the ultimate aim. We would like to lift up many of these areas and put them far away from our residents.

Actually, when I had the opportunity to attend the conference in Barbados, I noticed that their electrical plant was right next to residents as well, like really, really much closer than ours. It was really amazing to see. And Barbados is much bigger than our Island, Bermuda, which is 21 square miles long. So, we are particularly challenged when it comes to where we can place our plants of industries where we need these services. We require and need these services, so we will consistently be challenged in regard to where these industries can be located.

But moving forward with this particular Bill, Mr. Speaker, addressing clean air, odour, nuisances, no time is the right time. Right? And we know that time passes us by really quickly. For us not to act and do anything at all, Mr. Speaker, is not the right thing to do. Pollution will last forever and ever, Amen. It will last. And so, with the concerns of the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition, first, I do want to thank all of those interest groups who have laid submissions to the Ministry as it relates to this area, because no doubt we are thankful for the feedback. But it does not end today after we approve this Bill, Mr. Speaker. This will be a

constant concern, and it should be for us as a community. So, we do not expect the Bermuda clean air interest groups to fall away after we pass this Bill, because they still play a very important role in our community in making sure that the Bill holds up to what we expect it to do.

When we talk about the difference between regulation and the Bill being presented, *Why is the Bill being presented without regulations?* Well, we see this all the time, Mr. Speaker. We see this all the time, because we want to see how the Bill is working for us. And then the Ministers can make regulations around how we can improve standards, how we can improve regulations to support the Bill. It allows us the opportunity to make changes along the way or make regulations a just-right fit. And we have the ability to change regulations as well.

So clean air issues will continue to exist. And we are a Government that will continue to make sure that any additional amendments, if needed later in the future, can occur and will occur. But we must start with something. This is something that has been on our agenda for a while, Mr. Speaker, and has been a concern of our community for a while. While some may say this does not go far enough, the sanctions and the fines are pretty hefty, Mr. Speaker—\$5,000 a day? We note in the Bill \$20,000 as well.

What is most important, Mr. Speaker, is that we are recognising that there are standards out there, and we do recognise this. Our team recognises, the technical team recognises this. I actually have the opportunity every year to have a community meeting with my constituents (I want to thank DENR for their attendance) so that we are able to speak with the constituents if there are any issues that they think are concerning to them as it relates to the pollutants in the area, because we also want to make sure that these pollutants in the area are not impacting persons to a heavy degree. That should be our duty. That is the trust that we want of a country, making sure that there are standards in place and that we have proper laws and policies where we can go and have sufficient checks and observations and rules for our protections.

We take our country's, our peoples' health seriously, which is why we are here today to make sure that we are progressing this Bill. I woke up this morning, Mr. Speaker, with a message from my son. While he was talking about a totally different issue, I just thought it was relevant. He was talking about time, and he was talking about how time goes so fast. He was relating it to when we are no longer here and how he was not scared about death. But he is scared about the time that he has to spend with his family. I bring that up, Mr. Speaker, because again there is no right time. We have to move forward with the changes. We all know in this House that Bills can be amended, they can be strengthened. We have seen that year after year after year.

We have the opportunity, and we have opportunities to build upon Bills and to make them stronger should we feel they are not fulfilling the mandate that we initially set out for them.

So, Mr. Speaker, I stand to my feet to remind my constituents that this is something that we are pushing forward for all of the people in Bermuda. And that we should be very thankful and proud that we finally made it to this place today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

There are none?

Minister of Health, you have the floor.

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

Allow me just a few moments to support my friend and Honourable Minister to the right with respect to the proposed amendments to the Bermuda Clean Air Act. I would like to address this in particular as it relates to certain important aspects of public health and safety as it relates to pollutants.

Overall, Mr. Speaker, these changes will help to reduce the pollutants and the impact on health and safety (thank you) on us whilst of course fostering community engagement and ensuring that the industries do adopt the latest clean technologies. I would like to speak on three particular—

The Speaker: I'm sorry?

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: I would like to just to speak on three quick points as it relates to this insofar as the impact that this Bill will have particularly, as I said, on health and safety. That is (1) with respect to human well-being, (2) with respect to economic stability, and (3) of course environmental sustainability.

Focusing first on the human well-being and the health and safety issues as it relates specifically to the public health concerns. Regrettably, I think probably not anyone in this Honourable Chamber would not know anyone that is impacted by asthma and COPD. And regrettably many of those instances with respect to those two diseases, there is not only a high prevalence in Bermuda, but there are environmental impacts that increase the likelihood of someone suffering from asthma or COPD. And those specifically deal with the pollutants we see in the air.

Mr. Speaker, the prevalence of both of those unfortunately is very high. Granted, we recognise that smoking rates and other things do have an impact on those particular diseases. However, environmental factors such as pollution are one of the main regrettable issues as it relates the cause of COPD, which again is highly prevalent in Bermuda, particularly in our male community. And asthma, which I think probably everybody in here knows somebody, if not them-

selves, who is personally impacted. In addition, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases are also intensified by the presence of pollutants. These amendments that we are speaking about this afternoon will help to mitigate against those, Mr. Speaker. Again, these air pollutants that we heard my honourable friend speak about as it relates to sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide and the like—and I learned a little about those just by hearing him speak about it today—but they are linked to things like asthma, bronchitis, COPD, cardiovascular disease as well as regrettably certain cancers.

So, any piece of legislation that will help to mitigate against the impact, the adverse impact that pollutants cause to those particular highly prevalent diseases in our community is certainly something to be applauded.

Mr. Speaker, we also need to speak about our vulnerable populations. We have children, as well as elderly and persons who have preexisting health conditions who are also adversely impacted by the level of pollutants that we see within our environment. Amendments that we have proposed to be debating this afternoon will help to mitigate against those so that these individuals who have these particular health issues will have a better prognosis, if you will, because we are taking steps to reduce the impact of the pollutants within our community particularly for those individuals who could potentially suffer from those.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, I would like to speak real quickly about the second issue that I think would help with respect to this legislation, to support the legislation. So, in addition to the health and safety issues, there are of course the economic and social benefits, which, [with] respect, are tied directly to the health and safety issues because it would help to reduce health care costs. Unfortunately, as I said, there is a high prevalence of those types of diseases in our community, which we know are largely tied in certain instances to the level of pollutants in our society. And by taking steps to reduce that through legislation that we are debating today, it will have a direct impact on lowering our health care costs, as well as improving the quality of life for those vulnerable individuals whom I spoke about who suffer from diseases that are largely attributed to the level of pollutants in our air.

The third thing I would like to speak about real quickly, Mr. Speaker, is as it relates to the environmental synergies. We know that reducing the pollutants with respect to the nitrogen oxide as well as the sulphur dioxide will help to minimise acid rain as well as our biodiversity losses. Regrettably, we unfortunately are seeing a number of environmental impacts that are impacting adversely our biodiversity. And we certainly do not want to continue contributing to that. Legislation like this will help to minimise that, and as such we certainly would have to support that.

With respect to our water systems, we all know that we drink water from the rain, and that the filtration through our roofs and the tank system and so

forth is obviously impacted by the level of pollutants that possibly are in the air. Legislation like this will help to minimise that. And it goes a long way to reducing the airborne pollutants that we all will be exposed to.

As well, Mr. Speaker, in closing I wanted to speak really quickly about the penalty provisions. You will note that it was well publicised that there were a number of potential actions as it relates to certain pollutants in the air because of industrial organisations here. There was a lot of discussion as well as persons coming directly to the Ministry of Health with their concerns. And I understand and I applaud them for actually trying to take steps to address their concerns.

However, regrettably, I felt like my hands were tied because under the Public Health Act 1949, the maximum penalty if I were to find that there was a nuisance, [through] an order, an abatement order, the maximal penalty would have been \$2,500. Which was far, far inconsequential to some of the organisations that were being (quote/unquote) *the cause of the nuisance*. The \$2,500 was the maximum penalty for an abatement order. So, this legislation goes a long toward addressing that insofar as the level of fines and the penalties at the disposal of the Minister for failure to comply with the legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, in closing, I have to stand to support this piece of legislation from a public health and safety aspect, as well as from an environmental aspect, as well as drawing the importance as to the level of penalties that can be imposed by the Minister for failure to do what is right under this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

None other?

Minister Hayward.

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

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I certainly thank you for allowing me to weigh in on this debate today.

Mr. Speaker, in 2019, I was elected to the House of Assembly as a Member of Parliament. And I was elected in constituency 17, which is Pembroke Central. The largest issue that I have had to deal with in that particular constituency is the concern that residents have around pollution. If you ask the residents what their resolve is, they ultimately want the pollution to stop. They ultimately want the nuisance to discontinue. They want to live in an environment where they do not have any concern about whether or not the environment in which they live is negatively impacting the health of themselves or their children.

The fight for clean air for the constituents of constituency 17 does not end with the passage of this Bill. This is just one tool that the Government is actually utilising to assist residents with their concerns. And I support the aims of the Clean Air Act. Certainly, we should all support strengthening air quality standards. We should support the fact that we need to ensure that all emitting facilities that can negatively impact the country are actually covered by whatever standards we put in place. There has been a recognition from the Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Health that the current preventative measures that we had in place, or the current legislation that we had in place, to hold people accountable or organisations accountable for their actions simply were not strong enough.

On the doorstep when I speak to residents and they ask, simply, *Why hasn't the Government moved forward with fining the organisations who are actually emitting pollution in their particular community?*, unfortunately I have to respond and say, *At this time our legislation is not strong enough.* And while it addressed odours, it did not appropriately address what the Minister would describe as “particles” that are inflicting negative impacts on the health, well-being and property of the residents within that particular constituency.

The constituents are extremely frustrated at their long ordeal as it pertains to this particular matter. And that frustration is also passed on to their area representative and MP when I engage with the constituents in that area. They not only feel as though Government is failing them; but they feel as though we simply do not care. Which is not the truth. I certainly take my responsibility as a Member of Parliament extremely [seriously]. I take my role as a Member of the Cabinet extremely seriously as well. Mr. Speaker, when having dialogue with the residents of constituency 17, their concerns are warranted.

They have concern with the odour that is emitted from the storage farm, which is located on St. John's Road. There are odours that are emitted from that particular farm that residents feel are negatively impacting their health, and they are correlating [the odours] with negative health conditions. I have received several emails regarding ongoing headaches and respiratory issues that residents have seen and they come down with. If you are in certain residences on St. John's Road, the smell or the odour at times is unbearable. And unfortunately, persons cannot open their windows.

Then you have the matter pertaining to the soot, the rust-type of particle that is actually shot out of the smokestack that lands on people's property. It not only damages their property, where you can visit multiple houses and see that their property has been damaged. You can see that their vehicles have been stained. And you can see where this is on the roof,

and you can see visible marks where this filters down into their water.

What the Government should not be telling people in any circumstances is that somehow when we test your water, it meets the standards when the water and the filters are deteriorated to a point where they are actually brown. I do not believe that anybody should be told that the brown water that comes out of their taps or the acceptance that they need filters just to consume and utilise their rainwater is actually acceptable. They have serious concerns about whether or not the water is actually impacting their health, not just their health but also the plants that they have in their yards, as the soot falls onto their properties and impacts their vegetation as well.

Moving from the soot, there is another nuisance, which is the odour that is emitted from the actual smokestack itself. Some persons who reside behind C-Mart, particularly Ocean Lane—for some reason it is a natural drop zone that occurs. So, there is a very bad ongoing stench and odour that impacts the residents of that particular community. When having conversations with the company BELCO about why that occurs, it was described to me that naturally the smokestacks should naturally carry that particular emission out to the water and the natural drop zone should be in the ocean. But the natural drop zone at times is not in the ocean; it is right in a residential area. And those residents are negatively impacted. So, the concerns that the residents have are genuine.

This Bill is not a solution to those problems. It is one mechanism that we will utilise to hold organisations accountable for the negative impacts that they are having on the community. But not just holding people accountable—hoping to steer persons in a direction where the modifications can be made to the plant so that it no longer negatively impacts the community and the constituents.

Mr. Speaker, since 2019, I have been to town hall meetings that residents, before there was any named association, had put together. I have been to town hall meetings with the Clean Air Coalition. I have been to town hall meetings that BELCO has held where they outlined to residents the progress that they have actually made. We have been to farms that I myself as the area MP have hosted and invited the Department of Energy and the Ministry of Home Affairs. I have been down to meet specifically with the Department of Health officials regarding this matter. And this has been an ongoing journey for the last five years or so. And I anticipate the journey continuing.

But the residents are tired. The residents simply want the problem to go away. It is no doubt that persons who are living in that area are negatively impacted. It is no doubt that this should not be normal in any society, that their health and their property can be negatively impacted and then there is no accountability from the organisation that is doing the polluting or the Government, who is supposed to ensure that

our residents live within a healthy environment. So, when we start to talk about a necessary and a step in the right direction, there is no doubt in my mind that this particular Bill is an appropriate step in the right direction.

But more needs to be done. More needs to be done to equip me to knock on a door and have a conversation with a mother and convince her not to move out of her house because she believes that her child's health is being negatively impacted by their environment. When I knock on doors and when residents walk me around their house and they show me the cracks, and they believe that the cracks in their walls and their property have to do with the vibrations coming from the plant. When I knock on doorsteps and persons show me samples and say, *Mr. Hayward, would you drink this water?* And I do not try to be Superman when I go to these houses and say, *The Government says it's safe, so I'll drink a cup if you drink a cup.* We simply say that it is not acceptable. It is not acceptable that financial outlays continue to have to come out of residents' pockets for filters and things of that nature.

I would say that BELCO has made some progress in amending the way in which it interacts with the residents in the particular area as it pertains to roof cleaning, car cleaning and ensuring that there are filtration systems in houses. But we also have to accept that there are also peaks and valleys to that. For some months, there are good months and persons get the results that they need and the responses are timely. And then for other months, it is negative. What happens when you get assistance to clean your roof, and then four days later the same pollutant that was cleaned off of your roof is back on your roof? Shall the company come back and clean your roof again? And at who's expense? Because BELCO also has a measure of what is reasonable and unreasonable regarding cleaning persons' properties. But you can clearly understand the frustration that residents would have if this is their ongoing reality.

I have spoken up in the House of Assembly about this matter on a number of occasions. I have written articles in the paper on a number of occasions. And all I could do is advocate. When the first draft of this Bill came, we do not see the first draft because the first draft is not the draft we currently have. Because advocacy took place, advocacy on behalf of the constituents to ensure that the areas around soot were taken into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that anybody in the House of Assembly wants our neighbourhoods to be polluted. I think everybody deserves to have clean air. I believe it is appropriate for the Government to put standards in place. The concerns that the residents have will be ongoing whether this Bill is passed today or not. Because the problem will continue to exist after the passage of this particular Bill. And where the group at one point in time was a larger

group, the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition, even some of the members within that group have gotten a bit of apathy and given up on the process altogether.

So, I actually commend those individuals who have continued with their unwavering commitment to hold the Government and hold organisations to a higher standard for not just their benefit, but for the benefit of residents of the wider Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, what is required is a greater level of community engagement on this particular matter by all parties involved. And so that the residents are clear about the support that they can receive to remediate their properties, I still knock on doors, which in the same neighbourhood where one neighbour has got their roof cleaned, the other neighbour did not even know that the option was available to them. It should be widely communicated to entire neighbourhoods the options that are available to them for a remediation of their property.

There are persons who automatically get their roofs done on an annual basis, and then there are persons who have to request. There are persons who have to pay upfront, and then there are some persons who have worked with BELCO where they do not have to pay upfront because they may not have the funds. There needs to be a level of consistency as it pertains to how community engagement is actually done, but then having a broader understanding of the work that is actually being done to alleviate the problem.

And BELCO has done a good job in terms of publicising the work that they have done thus far. And I have been in a number and a series of meetings where BELCO has actually spoken to the phases of changes that they have actually made. But notwithstanding that, after every meeting we attend, it is left with a level of frustration and not a level of comfort. And the frustration exists because the problem still remains, notwithstanding there could be reduced occurrences of the problem.

As the area MP, [my] frustration has turned from just frustration with the companies to frustration with myself as their MP. *Well, Hayward, you're not doing enough.* But, Mr. Speaker, I am doing as much as I possibly can. I cannot reconstruct BELCO's plans. But what I can do is assist the Minister of Home Affairs with passing a piece of legislation that would hold organisations accountable if this behaviour actually continues. I can continue with advocacy as it pertains to ensuring that remediation takes place. I can continue with keeping the levels of communication between the utility and the communication and the Government intact by supporting and facilitating ongoing community dialogue.

There needs to be an earnest reflection of where we currently are and then earnest conversations on what is actually required to change the reality for the constituents, the residents who are being negatively impacted by pollution.

Mr. Speaker, it is extremely serious when you meet with families and they actually believe that they have had relatives who have passed away from cancer, and they believe that the cancer has been caused by the pollution in the community. While I am no scientist and I have no evidence on the linkage between the two, that is what residents actually believe. And they talk with other residents who then hear from and discuss with each other and then tell stories about other family members or other individuals in the same area whom they knew nothing about who have died from similar cancers. And they believe they are connected to the same problem, which is pollution in the area.

No, we simply at this point cannot up and move the entire plant. But there needs to be a conversation had as to, What are the practical steps required for changing the outcomes for the residents in the community? There is no need for politicising this matter. It is a severe concern, and it needs to be addressed. The concern is as big as the concern of those who lived in the Pond Hill, Back o' Town area, who had to endure the trash being dumped in their backyard before the incinerator was actually constructed. Equally, this is a problem for those residents. We fixed the first problem by constructing the Tynes Bay facility. But equally, this particular problem needs a solution. We cannot continue to say that *we care* from a government's standpoint or from an organisational standpoint, and our actions are not demonstrating progress to the constituents of Bermuda.

I have even called at times for us to go even a little further in recognising that people are being impacted, determining whether or not the utility would actually provide persons with subsidies on their electricity bill. Imagine being negatively impacted by pollution, and then at the same time seeing your bill increase to a level where you struggle to afford to pay for the bill. And you feel as though you are paying for your very own pollution.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jason Hayward: I do not know who behind me said, *Tell them to turn off the lights.*

[Pause]

Hon. Jason Hayward: But this is a very serious matter, Mr. Speaker. And I think we need to accept that this Bill is a necessary first step. But then we have to discuss as to how we re-engage the residents in the community who feel as though they are being negatively impacted. How do we reassure those individuals that we are looking out for their best interest as a collective? And it may mean that the Government then formally partners with the utility and creates a task force to determine how we make meaningful progress in the right direction. Whether or not our regulations

as they currently stand are fit for purpose—and I am not talking about the regulations as it pertains to this Bill, but the regulations that may hinder an organisation's ability to evolve.

How do we progress past the current approach to the production of electricity? Can we find a greener way, a cleaner way of actually producing electricity? And how can we collectively work together? We have seen where BELCO and the Government have actually been able to collaborate on infrastructure when we start to talk about putting infrastructure underneath our roads. And it needs to be a meaningful conversation as to how we evolve from our current position and how we can collectively work together to achieve an aim that provides comfort to a community that has lost hope.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to knock on doors. I will continue to listen to the concerns of the constituents. They will continue to show me where their property has been negatively impacted. They will continue to articulate to me the fears that they have for themselves and their family members. They have major concerns regarding the devaluation of their property, where some individuals have put their property on the market and [it is] simply not attracting buyers because of the proximity to the plant. It is changing the whole mood of the community in that particular area.

But every meeting that I have attended, the community have been extremely reasonable. They speak passionately, but there is no huge display of disrespect to Members of the Government or members of the utility. They simply want answers to questions. They simply want a solution to their problem.

Mr. Speaker, supporting this Bill means that you acknowledge that we have a problem. Supporting this Bill means acknowledging that we need better standards. Supporting this Bill means we are now creating a framework of accountability to those who break the standards. Supporting this Bill means that the Government is demonstrating that it is willing to work on behalf of the constituents and the residents of this country. What it does not mean is that there will be an end to the problem. But hopefully even in the debate today we can come to a common agreement that we should all be working together on a common solution so that the problem for the residents of Bermuda no longer exists. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

MP Campbell, you have the floor.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Minister of Health for her comments linking the particles and contaminants in our air to asthma and COPD. Like many, I have family members who suffer from both. And sometimes it is easy or sometimes we can forget

to link the occurrence of those illnesses with the quality of our air.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to touch on three things that Minister Hayward has said, the first one being that this is a serious matter. The second one being that this Bill does not make the problem go away. And the third thing that Minister Hayward said that I agree with is that if we leave perceptions, then they become the individual's reality.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know this Bill in general deals with the quality of air in Bermuda as a whole. But I do want to focus on the pollution that is associated or caused by BELCO's North Power Station. The reason is that I spent my younger days living and playing in that area. That was not so much my younger days, and we did actually go to where the North Power Station is located and played football because that was the original field for the Berkeley Institute. Having lived in that area, I can attest to the tremendous influx of industry and commerce that has occurred since I was a young boy. In fact, every morning from about age seven or eight, I was awakened by the sound of pylons being driven into the ground in preparation for the construction of warehouses and other commercial buildings. In fact, down behind St. John's field, if you go down that road next to St. John's field, many of the houses are now serving the purposes of the location for businesses, offices as well as the site of commercial activities.

Mr. Speaker, the North Power Station was commissioned in 2020. Since then, for four years, residents and businesses in the surrounding areas (and some much further afar, depending on the prevailing winds) have suffered. And I say for four years since the North Power Station was commissioned, but the older BELCO smokestacks are not that far away. So it is quite likely that this area has suffered for much longer.

And how have they suffered, Mr. Speaker? That when . . . we have heard this, but I think it is important that we repeat what the residents in this area have endured is damage to their property as a result of being covered by soot and cracks in their walls that they believe are from the vibration of the BELCO engine. Smells, bad smells, to the extent that they do not open their windows, which again can lead to poor air quality inside, in addition to poor air quality outside. Contamination of their water. And all of these pose threats to their health and well-being. It also interrupts their right to peaceful enjoyment of their property.

Now I am a bit ambivalent as to this Bill coming to us today because I think all of us would have liked to have seen this a lot sooner. But we also understand that the Bill today could possibly have been better . . . but I am not going to spend too much time on that because that does not help the persons who live in the vicinity of the BELCO power station. It does not help individuals who live within the vicinity of these aeration pits that emit smells that travel miles from

where they begin, affecting every neighbourhood along the way. My constituency is impacted by such an aeration pit and has been for some time.

I do have a number of questions for the Minister, the first one being, whilst I am glad to have this Bill before us today, why could we not bring it sooner? Another question that I have based on the Minister's brief is [regarding] the \$5,000 a day fine. Is there a maximum cumulative limit on that fine? A my third question for the Minister is, given the severity of this issue, why . . . if the WHO standards . . . *if*—and I am not an expert so . . . if the WHO standards amount to a higher standard, why would we not adopt them given the size and closeness of these smokestacks, these plants, (in many cases) to where people live on a daily basis?

And my last point, Mr. Speaker, is for the residents along St. John's Road, Mount Hill, Berkeley Road, Cemetery Road and the surrounding areas . . . and all areas that are affected by this. Because I am anecdotally told that depending on the way the wind is traveling, this can carry across the Great Sound. My major concern is . . . it is fine and dandy to have a reinforced and strengthened Clean Air Act with these amendments, but it amounts to nothing if we do not enforce. And that is one area in [much of our] legislation where we fall down. We do not enforce. So this is fine. But I look forward to seeing the enforcement when there are infractions. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Campbell.

MP Caines, would you like to make your contribution at this time?

Mr. Wayne Caines: If it pleases you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Mr. Speaker, I must declare my interest as is—

The Speaker: Customary.

Mr. Wayne Caines: —customary in our House. I am the president of Liberty which includes BELCO.

I am here today in the position as the MP for Devonshire North West. And so, Mr. Speaker, I know there is a part of my discourse where I must thread a needle. I sought advice and I will do my best, Mr. Speaker. If I fall or foul up any of the parliamentary rules, I seek your guidance in how to steer myself back on to solid ground.

The Speaker: Will do.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to review the legislation. I believe that it is indeed fit for purpose. When one considers legislation and the leg-

islation [under] these circumstances, one has to consider what the legislation is trying to solve.

Let me say from the beginning that every resident in Bermuda, including the residents in the ambit of BELCO have the right to enjoy their premises without being encumbered by any elements that are not consistent with the well-being or the health of the people in that constituency. As a Member of Parliament, as a Bermudian, as a man with family members in that neighbourhood, I have to reflect on the concerns. I have to reflect on the issues. In my capacity as the president of BELCO I have listened to a number of the concerns in several community meetings. And on every occasion not only am I moved politically, personally, socially, emotionally, their concerns have not fallen on deaf ears.

The legislation has put in place the opportunity for us to monitor the air, the ambient quality of the air, to monitor the water quality, to look at international guidelines. The Minister has taken the opportunity to consult with BELCO, to consult with other persons and entities in our country. And maybe people do not think that 10 weeks' worth of consultation is long enough. I believe that BELCO had the opportunity to submit our concerns to the Minister. And where we had disagreements with reference to the legislation, we had the opportunity to share that viewpoint with the Minister in writing.

I believe that when we are talking about an industrial plant in a residential neighbourhood, we have concerns and BELCO will continue to work with the members of the community to address these concerns and do so with vigour and verve. Mr. Speaker, it would not be in keeping with that which I spoke of earlier for me to give out the facts and figures of a number of things that we have done. It is not appropriate in these circumstances. I can simply say there are opportunities for us to continue to do better, for us to continue to work harder and for us to continue to listen to the residents [and] take on the feedback. We are an industrial plant in a residential neighbourhood that has been there for 117 years. And we have to understand that we have a responsibility, and we will continue to press to make the lives of those in the neighbourhood better.

When talking about the long-term fixes in that neighbourhood, the Minister has put out an IRP, an Integrated Resource Plan. The Integrated Resource Plan, Mr. Speaker, as you know, is the ability for everyone in this country to say what the energy mix will look like in Bermuda over the next 10 years. What do we think the country would look like with reference to power generation over the next few years? Well, this is an opportunity for us all to say, *Well, you know what? We are looking at what is the ultimate cause for the plant. Are they burning fuels which can be changed? Should they move towards natural gas? Should BELCO look to move toward getting more battery energy storage systems?*

Well, the Minister in contemplation of this and the RA have put out an IRP for consultation where we can make a long-term move as a country towards what will the energy mix look like for Bermuda in the future. And I think that is apropos and that is an example of where we can do things differently in Bermuda.

One has the potential to become transfixed with just focusing on BELCO in these circumstances. There is the Tyne's Bay incinerator. And so this legislation deals with the Tyne's Bay incinerator. The particulates and the exhaust coming from that government-owned facility where people oftentimes complain about that. The crematorium . . . the airport, excuse me, the private jet facility in St. George's. The noise abatement coming from the air—several people in constituency 1 where people . . . and constituency 2 where people have complained about the noises of airplanes landing and the difficulties that they face with airplanes landing.

This legislation deals with the noise. It deals with the water. It deals with a number of other concerns. So whilst I know it is easy oftentimes for us to set our sights on specific elements in this legislation, and rightfully so, I believe that the legislation is taking us in the right direction. When one talks about fines of a significant amount per day, those are things that, *Oh, they have a lot of money.* Well, when we are talking about investment in our country people have to see that this is a good place to employ capital and that it is a healthy place for an investment.

We have the responsibility not to only make sure that Bermuda is a safe place to employ and deploy capital, but that we look out for the benefit and the health of the people of Bermuda. I think not only is that the Government's prerogative, that is the main effort of the leadership team at BELCO. And I believe that if you talk to the neighbours out there in our ambit, they will tell you that that is not fast enough. We will say, or the company will say, that it remains a work in progress and you will see that we will continue to grow from strength to strength.

There is legislation in place with the Government IRP that looks at what the energy mix will look like in the future. And I am no . . . I do not have the powers of one Nostradamus, Mr. Speaker. But I can tell you a move to a switch in fuel, to move to natural gas, I can tell you that would help the neighbours drastically in their quest to get a respite from a number of the things that are going on in the community. When it looks to a water treatment facility, when one looks at a waste treatment facility, one would understand that BELCO has a waste treatment facility and over the last few months I am advised that that water treatment facility has been totally revamped and that the neighbours should be getting a significant respite from some of the smells that were affecting the surrounding area.

Whenever one, Mr. Speaker, talks about fixing a smell, fixing the engines, when one talks about what the future looks like, talking about in the future moving to natural gas, one must also understand that this comes at a cost. Unlike most communities the cost to move to natural gas, the cost to move to a battery energy storage system, which will give immediate abatement to a lot of the concerns that the members, the people in the community, have will come at a cost. And so we are going to have to factor in as a nation how that affects the bottom line or the cost per kilowatt hour of energy and factor in that there are moves and opportunities for us to do so, but that would also affect the cost of electricity in Bermuda.

I have heard Minister Hayward and his submissions. That is not lost on me as a Member of Parliament and as the president of the Island's only utility. I believe that as we all move to a greener Bermuda, we understand what the Minister's 2028 plan is for energy in Bermuda and what we are going to do with reference to looking at our abilities to . . . internal combustion engines and I think that we are indeed going in the right direction.

Oftentimes when people talk about the Clean Air Act, they do not focus on internal combustion engines. The combined effect of driving a car that has gas or what the effect that that would have on our environment collectively. We do not look at the effect that a crematorium, a private jet facility . . . all of those things the effect that cumulatively they have on our environment. So let us separate the conversation around the people outside of BELCO. They have concerns and they are legitimate. And I will not wane (to coin a phrase) away from . . . did you like that?

An Hon. Member: Ooh.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Wayne Caines: Well done. I will be here all afternoon. Minister Wilson just gave me kudos for that pun, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You woke folks up that time. They are all smiling.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Thank you, sir. Listen, I think that—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Wayne Caines: I am not going to be able to make it through that.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Wayne Caines: Mr. Speaker, I think that . . . in conclusion, I think that the legislation . . . we are going in the right direction. As I often say in different courses

that we are not going to fine our way out of this. Companies that come to Bermuda . . . understand, we are not going to fine our way out of it. What we are talking about now is, what does the Bermuda of tomorrow look like?

BELCO has been here for 117 years. We had an IRP. Together we chose a specific type of fuel and looking at the future we have to make some decisions as a country together, collectively, what the future looks like. The Minister has raised a point. The communication with BELCO and the neighbours must get better and can get better and will get better. But I believe as a country we are very prone to go into our respective corners and come out and whoever lasts the longest in the middle, then they hold up their hands. That is not the right way to proceed with this.

I give the Minister the respect due to this legislation, but I will say that the future of the energy mix in Bermuda is where the conversation should evolve to. It has to go away from what Bermuda of today looks like. How do we get to a Bermuda of the future? And keeping in mind the financial challenges that we will have with new legislation, how do we get to greener technologies? How do we make that greener technology more affordable for all? How do we take and create things like a microgrid that other countries are using to actually spread the load out around the country?

We now have about 15 megawatts of rooftop solar that is distributed around the Island. How do we get solar more affordable so the average person can be the beneficiary of more solar, and have solar on their home as the pricing of solar [voltaic] and other solar elements become cheaper?

So, we have to look at this in a biosphere, Mr. Speaker. It is very easy to say, right, that BELCO has 36,000 customers. About 150 of them live in this microcosm that we talk about. The other 35,000 customers, are saying that they want a reliable uninterrupted supply of power. And so, we have to focus on the other 35,000 and make sure that everybody gets a balanced, uninterrupted supply of power that, number one, we are all able to benefit from. Number two, that the country stakes its reputation on.

I will say it again. The concerns of the neighbours in the ambit of BELCO are significant and will not be run away from. I am talking about this from a holistic perspective of how an uninterrupted supply of power benefits the entire country. Yes, we must focus on what is in the best interests of those members on St. John's Road, Ocean Lane, Cemetery Lane.

Mr. Speaker, BELCO has purchased a whole row of homes. A whole row—five. There are a number of other things that I can share with you that we have done. The legislation is saying that, you know what, there are times, there are organisations that people fall afoul of the law, and you must hold them accountable. This legislation, the thinking, the move is supported.

The position that I will end on, Mr. Speaker, is that (as Minister Hayward said) we have to look at what the future of the country looks like. We have to look at what the future of the energy mix looks like. We have to look at what the cost in the future looks like. And as the IRP, Mr. Speaker, this is the most critical part, the Integrated Resource Plan is what Bermuda's energy mix will look like over the next 10 years.

Mr. Speaker, the RA has sent this out for consultation to Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda. So everybody now has to say to the Regulatory Authority in the next 10 years this is what we want the energy mix to be like. This is what we want to talk about when we are talking about solar. About a battery energy storage system. About microgrids. About offshore wind. About whether it is water power.

We have the opportunity to decide what the energy mix looks like in Bermuda. And that is our decision to say, you know what, the next 10 years we are going to move to battery energy storage systems, this many megawatts. We are going to move toward solar and we are going to go from, right now we have 15 megawatts. The goal in the next few years is to go to 25 megawatts and this is what it looks like. That is what the future of the country demands. For us to look at the energy mix, to say with the energy mix, this is how we rely less on fossil fuels. This is how we decommission the plants on these specific days. This is how we change fuel. [We] use heavy fuel oil, as you know, Mr. Speaker, in our power plant; on certain days we use LFO.

We have the opportunity to move that 100 per cent to natural gas. What is the cost of bringing natural gas from East End to Hamilton? How much would that cost? A conservative estimate five years ago was over \$150 million. Well, we have to look at how Mr. and Mrs. Bermuda pays for that and how does it affect the cost of electricity.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think this legislation is a step in the right direction. I believe that the energy mix in Bermuda specifically what the future will look like for the next few years is something that we must discuss and discuss quickly. I believe that the people in Pembroke that are being affected from this, they demand answers. They demand these things to be worked on. It remains a priority for BELCO and it remains a work in progress. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member . . . Opposition Whip.

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

The Speaker: [Microphone off]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I will take the whip part.

[Laughter]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I will not keep us long. There is a consensus that I do hear here that something needs to happen. And as I was listening to the Honourable Member Hayward speak to his constituency and the challenges, I do feel for him as . . . not just as a Minister but as a representative of his constituency and those others that circle around that same area. It must be difficult.

And to listen to the president, the Honourable Member Caines of BELCO. This is a real challenge and a balancing act. There are some wonders about Bermuda in its size and then there are some challenges because of our size. And that is what we are looking at today is one of the challenges of when we speak of the Bill and specific to BELCO. I can speak freely now because my daughter does not work there anymore, so—

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: It is very much a real challenge that we do have. And I accept the fact that it is not acceptable for anyone to have to come home, to have to deal with the contamination of what I consider to be one of the wonders of the world in how we collect our water, store our water, to be contaminated with all of the other things that happen.

One of the challenges in the area of BELCO is that it is like an industrial site. So you don't just have the BELCO issue. You have got construction companies, industrial companies that are there that also contribute to the pollutants in the air. How do they all work together—I would have no idea—and [what are] the consequences of that? But it is going to be a challenge in that particular area to figure out what needs to happen. Something does need to happen.

Although the plant may be in Pembroke, we recognise that in a small [Island] like Bermuda, just a slight bit of wind can carry it over the waters north, south, east or west, to affect. So, I do feel for the situation and take it to heart. Quite frankly, after reading the paper and not being of support . . . but having listened to some of the Members and what they have had to say, I must say that we do need to move swiftly and in the right direction. So I am hoping that the Minister as we go forward will carry on consultation that will allow for any amendments that need to happen to happen so that we can alleviate or allay the fears that some may have about the Bill today. So I am appreciative of the comments that have been made.

The area that I would like to just briefly speak to was with all of what we are talking about Island wide, I am still . . . I have not heard yet how we are going to manage. What is the infrastructure that is going to help us manage this difficulty? So we have the challenge of pollutants and then of course the Honourable Member Caines spoke to how we need to

look to the future. How are we going to be managing all of these thoughts as we go forward to ensure that we have something secure in place?

And I do take to heart . . . it has got to be difficult for residences still to be receiving a BELCO bill at the same time as, you know, the roof of their homes is being covered in pollutant because there is no solution in the actual Bill itself other than fining. And so, we do need to come to a resolution as to what is the next move. And I would encourage the Government to continue on feverishly. Some of my colleagues have mentioned that it seems like it has taken a while just to get here. So I am hoping that listening to both Government and the Opposition that there may be some swiftness to getting to a direction that is pleased—that is acceptable. It may not always be pleased, but it is acceptable to everyone that we are heading in the right direction.

So it is the infrastructure and an understanding of that infrastructure that is going to manage and enforce this legislation that is in place. And I have not really heard much talk about how all that is going to work and what that is actually going to take in order for this to happen. Because one of the things when you are dealing with people is . . . if there is a challenge and we say we are going to approach it and deal with it, you know, we do not want to over promise in any particular way, but we need to alleviate those fears.

If we say we are going to do something and then it takes a bit of time to get to that point, if there is no understanding about the process then the backlash is bad. I believe that this Bill is coming today as a result of the fact that people are still extremely concerned (I am being polite with my words here) concerned about their health. So, we have had a good round robin of what people feel in this particular House and also some of the residences.

I am asking if the Minister can lay out for us how this is going to work next week after it is approved. How is it going to work going into the budget year of 2025/26? Exactly what are we looking at and how this is going to be managed? Do we have the resources in place to move us forward with some resolution? Because the resolution simply cannot be that we are just, you know, we are just fining. And all these pieces of equipment that is going to need to be updated by many of these companies. How is that actually going to be regulated? It is fine to say that we are going to regulate it and someone is going to inspect it. But you can just . . . you heard today, many of the facilities that are around that would affect members like the Honourable Member De Silva and his construction company would be affected by any of the work that he might be doing.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: When it says “plant” it is not talking about a tree.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And gas stations too!

An Hon. Member: Oh, wow.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, I was just going to get to that. Don't . . . let me finish. Let me finish!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: It will affect all of that. We have seen where we have had challenges down at Ferry Reach with the fumes coming from Ferry Reach. Certainly not from the local stations—

[Laughter]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: From the plant in and of itself challenges there. And I can recall an instance where people, residents—and it was around Christmas time, too, a couple of years ago—were getting a foul smell, and someone was not quite keeping up with their maintenance. So, it is important that we understand, that people understand, that there is a way to manage this and they need to feel secure that the Government is going to put in place those management facilities and individuals.

I do not even know if this is going to require more staff. Maybe not. I do not know. But it would be interesting to hear how this is going to happen. And I am imploring the Minister whether or not there is an election called, not anytime soon, he might not be here. But that the Minister . . . the Minister certainly going forward look at how we speed up the activity to making something happen.

It cannot be easy for a representative of a constituency to have to go to a house and to have to hear constantly issues of the water. So again, I believe listening to the several Members has somewhat changed my heart and what I was going to say. And so, I am hoping the Minister will move swiftly and I am expecting more consultation and some amendments that will allow us to recognise that this Government is very serious about what is taking place as we go forward.

I look forward to hearing from the Minister about how he is going to manage this whole project going forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP, Opposition Whip.

[Does] any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: MP Famous.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am going to start off with the topic of . . . degree of . . .

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: What, what? I need . . .
I am going to start off with a degree of technical incest.

An Hon. Member: Oh! Goodness.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, inside of this House at this very moment, there are four cousins. Well, four persons who are related to each other somehow or the other. One happens to be the MP for the area.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: One happens to be the president of the company.

Mr. Wayne Caines: You guys didn't know Jason was my cousin in it.

Mr. Christopher Famous: One happens to be the Minister responsible for legislation. And one happens to actually know what is going on.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So that cousin is going to declare his interest as someone—

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: —who has worked inside the plant for 32 years.

Mr. Speaker, I have worked at BELCO for 32 years, and I have never heard the number of complaints about BELCO . . . not necessarily the prices, but the other stuff, as I have heard in the last four years.

An Hon. Member: Uh-oh.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Legitimate complaints. All right? People have soot on their roof or whatever else. Those are legitimate complaints and BELCO has done a very good job, a very expensive job, in keeping people's roofs white.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is important to know what goes on on the inside, not just the outside.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, you see, Mr. Speaker, we have certain procedures that we see in the plant

that I am sure if the president tells me, *Don't say it*, I ain't going to say it.

The Speaker: Member, let me caution that the president did come speak to me to ask for some leeway. And I have guided him on how far he could and could not go.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay.

The Speaker: So, I am going—

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, may I have some leeway, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I am going to ask you to be mindful with that—

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Keep it public and [do] not get into private—

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, no, no, no, no. Nothing like that. Technical. It is all technical.

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, there is this thing we do to maintain the turbines. We call it water washing. We call it nut shelling. Where we keep the soot off the turbines. And ever since these legitimate complaints have been coming out, we got orders from up top to cut down on the water washing. Cut down on the nut shelling. Because that will cut down on the amount of soot, particulate, that goes up in the air.

We also have this thing called opacity meters.

An Hon. Member: Uh-oh.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Opacity means like how clear are the emissions. If it is a certain, if it goes . . . not just your eyesight, but if by scientific values it says this has gone above a certain opacity we shut the engine down.

Mr. Wayne Caines: Danger, danger.

Mr. Christopher Famous: If the wind is blowing to the north, we don't start the engine. We don't start that particular engine. Because if we start it, just like when your car starts you get this puff of smoke come out, you get that puff of smoke and it is going to be over the Mount Hil and, you know, the next day people are going to be calling to complain.

So, I am saying all of this, Mr. Speaker, that despite what the public may think, we have vastly changed our operational procedures in order to mitigate—not totally stop, but mitigate—the emissions that are going on people's roofs. So, I don't want people to take it idly like he is just saying that because of the president. Or he is just saying that because he is

the MP. Or he is just saying that because of the Minister. No. My entire job structure has had to change since we built that plant.

So let me move on, Mr. Speaker. We are living in a world in Bermuda right now where despite the propaganda there is increased economic activity. There is increased population. There is going to be increased hotels. There is going to be increased electric vehicles. So, what is the cumulative total here, Mr. Speaker? A bigger demand for electricity.

So, when people say, *Let's just go solar. Let's just go LNG.* And you are saying to them, *Do you actually know how this works?* They are like, *Yes, the sun comes out.* Okay, but what about when the sun goes down? Nobody wants the power to go off when the sun goes down.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Yes, right? So that means irrespective of those 200 persons in Mount Hill, the other 35,800 people still want their electricity. So, we have to provide that. We cannot say look we are rationing electricity because, you know, the wind is blowing to the north.

So, I say the reality is that we have to educate the people of Bermuda that green energy, number one, it ain't cheap. And number two, it is not always pragmatically possible. If we put in LNG, we are talking about \$200 [million] to \$300 million. Who is going to pay for that? No one is just giving us \$200 [million] to \$300 million. Somebody has got to pay for that.

We do not have enough land space to put in a big solar farm. Right?

Mr. Wayne Caines: Preach.

Mr. Christopher Famous: This has to come from fossil fuels. So, I am going to round it off here to say, the one cousin that knows what is happening is telling people we are doing our part. We have changed our operation procedures to mitigate the particulate that goes out in the air. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Well done.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Bill. My neighbouring MP, the Minister of Economy and Labour, who is the MP for my family, has basically said all that needs to be said around this, as [have] MPs in that particular area which is affected primarily by the main energy producer in the country. But, of course, as other Members have spoken this applies across the Island. And it is not just BELCO that is affected and impacted by this. I know that many persons would

have heard and would have known different things in different areas where there are challenges with pollution.

This Bill gives the Government additional tools with which to deal with these particular matters. It is something that has taken an incredibly long time to get to. It is something the Minister has outlined insofar as the process that [it took] to get to this particular space. But I could not allow this debate to pass as the MP for constituency 18 and not recognise my support for this particular Bill.

My constituents will be grateful that this is happening. What they will want to see after this is done is they want to make sure there is action, and they want to make sure that they see a change. And they want to make sure that they can see a result if things are not going in their way. So, I commend the Minister. I commend the team for their work on this. It has been a very long process of consultation. It has taken longer than some of us would have liked, but it is important that we get it right to move ahead and I think that we have struck the right balance here so we can advance. And I have full and complete trust in the Honourable Deputy Premier and Minister to advance this particular matter as we go forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.
MP Swan.

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

Mr. Speaker, I would like to also echo the Premier in supporting the legislation. But it would be lost on me not to mention that before fuel gets to BELCO it arrives in St. George's.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And when that fuel arrives in St. George's, there are residents in Ferry Reach, as the Government Whip alluded to briefly, who smell the fuel when it is leaving sometimes the ship, the *Muscat*, I think. They call me Muskee up in White Hill, but the *Muscat*. Not to be confused, named after me. And has been named in articles as being one of the ships where residents who become lay scientists when they call you and you have to write on their behalf. And I want to thank the president and the Member for the constituencies in Pembroke who spoke and declared his interest for responding to emails that I have sent to him. And also, the Ministry of the Environment and Dr. Smith certainly have been persons who have been reached out to.

But these persons are . . . and I will share some thing that they might have said to me, that it is unbearable. The smell of the fuel when it is being pumped off the ship and it arrives on the Island. And sometimes they have to keep their windows closed,

many times. And it can burn their eyes. And they are concerned. And they are there all the time in their homes, many are seniors. So, seniors tend to know the issue or the problems on a day-to-day basis as it is occurring.

If you are a resident, particularly of Ferry Reach, and your family has owned property there for over 70 to 100 years, you may recall that that area was very much a tourism area before it became industrialised. Where BIOS is today, it still functions as somewhat of a hotel for scientists, but right across the street there in the areas that were owned by families who still live there today would have remembered when their grandparents owned property that would have been Sol and RUBiS, formerly Shell and Esso. And those areas would have been a golf course. Probably one of the fifth, sixth golf courses in Bermuda called Shore Hills Golf Course and Hotel right there.

So, we have seen the transformation of that area go from being a tourist area that encouraged people to come here for golf to being an area of national importance to house fuel and energy. In addition to also being an area that houses two prisons and also being an area that has seen greater industrialisation with regards to warehouses.

The impact on residents that have lived in amongst this can be very traumatic. Particularly those who are older who would have remembered when the particular area would have resembled what the view westward of Anchorage View Road would look like when you looked west. Now when you look in an easterly direction you see a more industrialised area. So, we cannot take the concerns of these residents, who would smell that particular, those vapours in the air.

And also, Mr. Speaker, you cannot neglect the fact that these residents also in this space are concerned because they live on the area where planes land. So, they would be getting that, as the emissions come as the plane lands and also as it takes off, in accordance to where the wind is blowing.

An Hon. Member: And noise.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And thank you, Honourable—and the noise as well.

So, we have great empathy for what they have to endure—in the national interest. In the national interest. So, legislation such as this coming forward with regulations as we go forward is of very great importance. I mean, just to share with you (it would not be covered under this legislation), but one of the things that residents there are hopeful for is an evacuation plan because they live on an isolated peninsula in Ferry Reach. And what happens . . . and they have had industrial accidents out there. They had an industrial accident (I think) probably around 2019 and the like.

So that raises the concerns. But luckily if you go in that area, you will see signs *Accident Free X*—thousands of days or whatever. And that is a good thing. But persons who live there would be ever mindful that should an accident happen, what is the plan? And so the dialogue in that direction has been caused to take place, but certainly an action plan to facilitate evacuation either through BIOS or even further down, they are repairing that dock that exists down at the end of Ferry Reach. This is a nice area where people camp and fish. They can bring their boats in and stuff like that—might be an area. And we know that it is close by virtue of the former Railway Trail bridge there to Coney Island and the like.

So let us not lose sight that it is not only on Cemetery Road, St. John's Road, Berkeley Road that has concerns like this. Concerns also exist on Ferry Road, on Anchorage View Road and in other areas in close proximity to where the fuel is brought into this Island before it gets to Cemetery Road.

And so, with that, Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak on behalf of the constituents in that area and the concerns that they have and some of the, I would say, trepidation that they live with. And some of the areas where we can look to alleviate some of their concerns. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member want to make a contribution at this time? None?

Deputy.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all the Members who have given contributions to this discussion.

In the spirit that this legislation exists, it was very important to hear from all parties in this Chamber around the matters that relate to the passing and implications of the Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 that we are here to discuss. And every comment I have found important. Every comment is complementary to the democratic process that we rely on. And I greatly appreciate that we have been able to bring this Bill today, to have this discussion. I am certainly going to use the time I have as quickly as I can to address many of the points that were raised. And certainly, more specifically answer questions that were actually put forth in this debate.

Let me just make it clear that this legislation has been brought to ensure that we can address in a much more effective way the issues around the clean air within our jurisdiction and how to ensure the health, safety and sustainability of our environment. And most importantly to address the issues that have arisen over the years around the sensitivities that ensuring clean air brings to the table.

My honourable friend who sits to my left has effectively, as the Minister for Health, brought that health of so many aspects of society centre around what we are doing today. Because our development

as a country has brought upon the impacts that we are seeking to police and manage. We have decided as a country to be developed and modern. That means certain attributes come with that. We are not . . . you know this like agrarian sort of prolific, tropical environment in the middle of like the Amazon. So, there is development, there is infrastructure. And that infrastructure to be maintained requires certain types of operations. And some of that means there are licensed operations that pollute.

The clean air legislation has been framed, and for as long as it has existed to manage that in a way to mitigate the impact it has on the natural environment, the human environment and the overall Island that we live on in every aspect. So, this legislation is to further empower and enhance that process which we must continue to do.

Now there were a number of questions that were raised and issues raised. And I am going to go through them. There was mention of the WHO which was mentioned in relation to another submission that was given today—or a number of submissions. The quality of monitoring equipment. The documents that were submitted as part of the consultation. And, Mr. Speaker, I did outline in great detail the process that the consultation took around this. That was imperative to this Bill's formation. Let us make it clear. There was no way that this Bill could have even been in any way done without substantial consultation from particularly those who were licensed under it, but those who are relying on it for protection. And also, those who have a genuine interest in what support it will provide to the overall need to protect our environment

Let me make it clear. There were hundreds of participants in the consultation. And if you will allow me, Mr. Speaker, I will show you a part of the process (if you don't mind). This is a spreadsheet of multiple pages which are the submissions that we received around this. So, if there is a question that the department and the team and the pollution team solved, it has the submissions from who it came from, industrial and non-industrial participants in the consultation and their responses.

So, if anybody, just as an exhibit, questions whether there was consultation, I am bringing the proof of it. There are multiple pages. There are hundreds of submissions in this document that came from numerous parties. So, I just want to be clear that there were no restrictions on who was able to give submissions or the quality that was given to the submissions and the answers. Everyone and everybody who participated in the consultation process over the 10-week period had the benefit of this.

And to the point where I do believe that we had a similar document online where someone who submitted (and I think I said this already in my presentation earlier) who put in a question, because you could submit a question, it could be answered in real time. And everybody who signed into that document

could see the answer. A very transparent process, and this was something that I insisted that we do for the benefit of the openness of this process.

Mr. Speaker, I did mention in my brief 600-plus licensees under this legislation. All of them received a direct communication from the department on this particular process and were invited to give submissions. That is just the licensees. That does not include all the outside groups that I have mentioned. Six hundred. There are 600-plus licensed entities. I think it is 679—I can go back and look at the precise number. They all received a direct communication from the department on inviting them to contribute.

Now, much has centred around the Clean Air Coalition and their role in this. And, again, supportive of their role that they have formulated for themselves as an advocate for the concerns and issues that particularly their constituency in the vicinity of the controlled plant, which is BELCO, which is licensed under the legislation, have experienced. Particularly over the last four years since the North Power Station. And they have been the chief public advocate for the concerns and the issues that those persons have experienced. And they have been horrendous.

I have been very vocal publicly on how I felt about that experience as has been stated. I have personally gone to the area to see, to the residences, and seen, along with Dr. Smith who is here as the advisor, to see what the impacts have been on those homes. So, it has not been a distance type of learning experience. It is going in and speaking to persons in the vicinity of BELCO, in the shadow of particularly that particular facility to understand what they have been through. So that is the level of attention that we took to that.

There were other questions, particularly by the Honourable Member who sits for . . . who spoke first for the Opposition, MP Pearman, which he raised about firstly—and this was a question that was raised about the WHO guidelines. And I just want to, if you will give me permission, read some—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —detailed information about that.

There is an accusation that was made that we have failed to follow WHO guidelines. But here are the facts around the WHO guidelines. The WHO is not a governing body at all around air quality. They are not—and in any country on the planet. They are *guidelines*. There is something very different from guidelines and standards. Those are two different definitions. They recommend guidelines. Standards are what are recommended by authorities that actually govern such as the EPA and other organisations in the UK and the EU. Standards which are very precise and can and need to be adhered to . . . or should be adhered to. Nothing the WHO issues is a guideline,

and you may seek to aspire to those guidelines. And there is no country . . . and we went through an exhaustive process to find countries that are abiding by the WHO guidelines. We could not find any.

And again, I am not trying to belittle the effort to inform us, but we have a duty in this process to ensure that there are things that we would adhere to that we can actually follow and that actually we can follow to reach a practical effort to actually accomplish a positive result in what we are doing. Following aspirational goals usually ends in not having success. So, the WHO guidelines are not practically followed by any country, from the exhaustive research that we did. And it must be noted that the Bermuda Clean Air Regulations are due to be aligned by more stringent target levels.

As I mentioned in my brief, one standard for fine particulates specifically, will align with the US EPA standard that has recently been revised in the US. So, we are following the latest in some of the provisions that we are seeking to put in place through this legislation.

I hope that answers the question around the WHO. Guidelines are fine. But if they are not practically, feasibly able to be followed you cannot . . . it makes no sense trying to put them in place. Because the desire is to have more effective standards that can be adhered to, that you can apply to a licence that a licensee can actually follow.

We do not want to be creating licences with standards that are impractical to follow, despite how glorious or pretty they may be, issued by a three-letter organisation. And I have great respect for the WHO, I might add, and they are great partners to Bermuda in many areas of health and everything else. I am not speaking to begrudge the WHO. But I do think that where things apply, we will follow, we will seek to put in place. In this case, the WHO standards were not applicable.

There was another question in relation to monitoring equipment which was also put forth by MP Pearman in reference to standard monitoring equipment. And again, I would like to reference some information that I have on that. The monitoring strategy and equipment deployed by the department through BIOS—and BIOS is the independent monitoring organisation, Mr. Speaker, so everybody is clear. They do independent monitoring.

BELCO itself does monitoring of which under their licence they are required to provide and report. And I do believe that their reports on their monitoring is actually publicly published. Am I correct that they are made available publicly? Yes. Anyone can see the results of their own monitoring. So, nothing is secret. It is available to be seen.

But BIOS does independent monitoring. And BIOS has been adapted to allow greater data to be collected from near-to residents than prior in recent changes. One of the challenges with some of the EPA

standard monitoring equipment is that it is not actually designed for areas like Bermuda that are in close proximity. You actually . . . for the equipment to be effective, you actually have to have it in a certain type of environment. And the proximity, because of the close density of Bermuda, some of the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency] equipment actually does not . . . it would not be effective.

So, we have to ensure that we right-make data collection technology for Bermuda that works for our situation. It may be US EPA but the US is a big place and they have very different situations like we do. So US EPA-compliant monitoring stations are large with stringent citing requirements. So, they have to be in a certain place. You have to position them in a certain way such as that cannot be placed in ideal areas where complaints may be the greatest due to the space required to locate . . . and we are talking about shipping container-size monitoring equipment. It is not some little bottle that you put on a rock. These are actually massive containers of technology and don't fit necessarily into an environment that is suitable for Bermuda. So, I just want Members to crystallise why we must choose a particular type of equipment.

Note that the environmental authority required BELCO to place a more portable US EPA-compliant monitoring station at Ocean Lane, which is where one of the monitoring stations is where down drafting was occurring. This portable monitoring station was so large that it led to the homeowner asking it to be removed. That is one of the challenges that we had and eventually we did have (for some time) permission. But it was so, I guess, overbearing and large that the owner of the property asked us to remove it. So that did encumber that particular situation. But there have been alternative options found for different types of monitoring. Which is why we had to find different types of monitoring systems that would be more applicable to apply to Bermuda.

So, DENR [Department of Environment and Natural Resources] has reduced the number of US EPA-compliant monitoring stations from two to one and have increased the number of pole-mounted sensors from zero to seven. So we actually have more monitoring because we changed the type of monitoring we had and found it was not US EPA monitoring, but it actually allows us to have more monitors. That means that there is more data collection technology available. So we're actually getting better, more data, than what we are getting with the other types of technology.

If a pole-mounted sensor indicates exceedances of a limited value that DENR will need to consult with the landowners, where . . . what nearby site can be identified to locate a large USA monitoring station. So, if there is a need we can use a different monitoring. If this is an area where there is a substantial amount of data being collected and we can get a dif-

ferent type of monitoring but we actually are going to have more monitoring stations using different types of technology than using that orthodox US EPA monitoring.

So, I will go on, Mr. Speaker. Another comment raised about the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition consultation. I will go back, and I will reply to that. A question was raised about the failure to engage with public feedback. I do believe this was what was referenced by the Honourable Member, Mr. Pearman, and disregarding the principles of good governance on the basis of that we didn't follow good practices with consultation. Let me just make it clear.

Again, Mr. Speaker, DENR invited all stakeholders including licensees of existing control plants a number of times, at least twice, to contact DENR. Messages were sent to them more than once to arrange for face-to-face meetings during the 10-week period. So we offered to not just put your submission on a website. We said if you wish to come in and sit with us and talk through the proposed legislation and the proposed Regulations that we are suggesting and how it impacts you, you can come and sit with us in the office at a time of convenience and you can go through that process.

We did that for everybody who wanted it. All right? DENR met with BELCO, AIRCARE, Ministry of Public Works. DENR also received 44 comments (I think this was in my brief) from the public forum with feedback provided at the end of the consultation period. DENR also received 43 comments by email. These were all considered in terms of whether they actually contributed to amendments. So, some things people were sending did not contribute to amending the Bill or amending the legislation, but actually were just perhaps comments of some advice or information to the proposed amendments.

So certainly, things that came in that were of value they were considered in the process. And I just want to be clear, again, particularly with the Bermuda Clean Air Coalition, Mr. Speaker, DENR emailed them at least four times. I myself took a personal interest and Dr. Smith can tell you. I asked, *Have you reached out to the BCAC?* And he would tell me each time, *We have done this. We have done that.* He kept a record of how many times we emailed people. At least four times over the 10-week period but did not receive a response before the 31st of August. They did not respond at all to us.

We reached out; they did not respond. Didn't! So it is interesting that they say that we didn't respond to them. We, through 10 weeks, made an effort to communicate with them. No response. DENR received a submission despite that after the August 31st date, Mr. Speaker. And that was the 89-page document that is talked about.

There was initially another 89-page document which was received by their representative, and I will speak [to] that in a minute, with their comments and

suggestions were considered as they were just like everybody else when amendments were proposed for the Act and Regulations. So they gave a submission. They were considered even though they came after the deadline.

Prior to that they, along with BEST and I believe the National Trust had retained an overseas organisation to represent them. So that organisation sent in an additional 80-plus page document, Mr. Speaker, of which was considered within the time frame. And whatever out of that document that was appropriate to contribute positively to the amendments it was taken.

We then got the other document directly from the Clean Air Coalition despite the fact that we had tried to contact them, despite the fact that we tried to invite them to sit with us. Actually, despite the fact that we had invited them to give submissions, after the 31 August date, but guess what, Mr. Speaker? We still took them, those submissions, and we factored them into the discussion. That is one reason why this process took so long.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Because we spent . . . we had to actually delay because we had a nearly 100-page document . . . we had a . . . we had 160 pages of documents that we needed to carefully review to make sure that we were being comprehensive.

Now, I will move on to other questions that were raised. MP Cannonier [asked about the] next steps to implementation. We will, obviously with the passing of this Bill it will mean that standards for proper . . . for clean air, will rise. Once the legislative package is then passed there will be a six-month period of which all parties who are subject to being licensed have to prepare themselves to be licensed.

That will certainly be evaluated up against their licence actual time because everybody has a licence which has to be followed. But they will have six months to prepare even after the legislative package is actually passed to prepare to come in and discuss with us what changes they have to make and everything else. So we are not going to slap them with the law after the day and then they have to follow it. No, there is a period where all entities involved—because some of them are really big and some of them are really small—will have to actually implement and work with us to make sure that they can follow according to their licence requirements.

Older management equipment. Equipment purchased. There was a question about older management equipment, equipment purchased. The same equipment tested as part of the training and certification of Government personnel. There are three persons who actually as a result of the new equipment that we acquired (and this is in my brief) that have

gone through the training in the UK so that they can actually operate the new technology.

I think, Mr. Speaker, I may have answered most of what was raised and . . . Oh, I'm sorry. There were a couple of things. There was something raised by MP Campbell about the fine, about the \$5,000 per day fine. Is there a limit to this?

The intention is to encourage licensee holders to rectify their issues without have to run up into significant fines. So even if they are fined, we are going to try and make sure that they actually remedy so that they are not confronted with multiple fines per day. But this is a measure to show that we are serious about enforcement, where enforcement about management and enforcement about the protection that we are trying to put in place. It is meant to be stronger as a deterrent to violations of any licensees and having to put down any orders to any entity that is licensed.

I . . . let me see. I know that there were other comments by other members. I think. And there is a sensor that is going to be put on by MediWaste down by the airport as well as there is a sensor that will be put down near Skyport to monitor the emissions that were related to the private jets. So all monitors will be put in place with that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to conclude this portion by saying that Minister Hayward, who gave a very impassioned submission on behalf of his constituents, I have endeavoured to at all times be very sensitive to the issues that he is facing and the pressures that he is under, and also certainly that his constituents are experiencing which is why these amendments to this . . . now, I want people to understand that this has not just been about BELCO. This is going to impact the whole Island, and I think we have clearly outlined that hundreds of entities are going to be impacted by this Bill as well as the scope is widened even further to some of the provisions in place to who is going to be impacted.

There will be additional activity that will be impacted by this. But more importantly, this is part of the path that we are pursuing to bring remedy to the issues that the people of western Pembroke face. I am mindful of them. I am sensitive to them. They actually worry me because I do not know some of the other impacts over the years that this sort of exposure may impact people which is why certainly it has been very high for the past four years.

I am bringing this Bill now. And I know that there was some suggestion about rise and report. Every day that this Bill is not passed is one more day they are being subjected to what they are being subjected to. I am endeavouring to keep that as short as possible and ensure that some remedy is brought to the situation. Any more we delay this, we delay things not happening to the people of west Pembroke or anywhere else where pollution is pervasive in our neigh-

bourhoods against people and the health of our citizens.

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

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

MP Scott Simmons. Will you take the Chair for us, Mr. Simmons.

Mr. Scott Simmons: Absolutely.

The Speaker: Thank you.

House in Committee at 5:15 pm

[Mr. Scott Simmons, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

CLEAR AIR AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Clear Air Amendment Act 2024](#).

I call on the Minister in charge, to proceed. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will move firstly clauses 1 through 8.

The Chairman: Clauses 1 through 8.

The Minister has asked that clauses 1 through 8 . . . go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Bill seeks to amend the Clean Air Act 1991 [the "principal Act"] to provide pollution reduction measures that address areas affected by poor air quality [and nuisance odours] caused by controlled plants; to update criminal penalties for contravention; and to provide for connected purposes.

Clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill as the Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 which amends the Clean Air Act 1991.

Clause 2 amends section 2 of the principal Act by inserting in the appropriate alphabetical order the following definitions:

- "approved air contaminant measurement methodologies and processes" means the prescribed methodologies and processes for determining and measuring air contaminants [as] prescribed in regulations;
- "best available technologies" means the techniques which are the most economically and technically viable for preventing or minimising the emissions of air contaminants and nuisance odours on the environment;

- “D/T limits” means the prescribed limits at which an odour sample which is diluted with odourless air cannot be distinguished from the odourless air;
- “nuisance” means a statutory nuisance as set out in the Fifth Schedule;
- “nuisance odour” means an offensive odour that is detected by trained inspectors at dilution levels that are more diluted than the D/T limits as prescribed; and is or can be reasonably expected to be injurious to public health or welfare; or [unreasonably] interferes with the enjoyment of life or use of the property, considering the character and degree of injury to, or interference with the health, general welfare, property or use of the property affected, and the location of the odour source and character of the area or neighbourhood affected;
- “Air Quality Action Plan” or “Plan” means an Air Quality Action Plan approved by the Minister under section 12C;
- “trained inspector” means an inspector authorised in writing by the Minister as having been trained in the detection of nuisance odours.

Clause 3 amends section 5(2) of the principal Act by inserting after paragraph (d) the considered installation of abatement equipment for the purposes of preventing nuisance odours.

Clause 4 amends section 6(3) of the principal Act by inserting the following after paragraph (b)—

- (ba) subject to [such] requirements as it may think fit regarding the installation of abatement equipment for the purposes of preventing or minimising nuisance odours; or
- (bb) subject to a condition that, in installing the controlled plant, the operator shall use the best available technologies for that industry or, where that is not practicable, reducing nuisance odours from the controlled plant; or

Clause 5 amends section 9(2) of the principal Act by inserting after paragraph (b) the following paragraphs—

- (ba) subject to such requirements as it may think fit regarding the operation of any abatement equipment installed for the purposes of preventing or minimising nuisance odours as prescribed;
- (bb) subject to a condition that, in operating the controlled plant, the operator shall use the best available technologies that are available to that industry for preventing or, where that is not practicable, reducing nuisance odours from the controlled plant.

Clause 6 amends 11(1) of the principal Act by inserting after paragraph (f)(v) the following paragraph “(fa) prescribing approved air contaminant measurement methodologies and processes and D/T limits;” and by inserting after paragraph (ha) the following

paragraphs “(hb) without prejudice to paragraph (ha), prescribing the techniques, protocols and criteria to prevent, minimise and detect nuisance odour; (hc) prescribing the form of an Air Quality Action Plan;”.

Clause 7 amends section 12(1) of the principal Act in subparagraph (b)(ii) by deleting the comma at the end of that subparagraph and substituting “or” and inserting thereafter “(c) that a nuisance odour as determined by a trained inspector is being emitted into the air from a controlled plant, structure or thing;”. And in the continuing provision by inserting after “air contaminant” the words “or nuisance odour.”

Clause 8 (which is the last clause that I have moved)—

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Clause 8 amends the principal Act by inserting after section 12 the following new sections:

Notice to Submit Air Quality [Action] Plan—
[section] 12A(1) An inspector may issue a notice requiring a person who has received an emission control order under section 12 to submit to the Minister an Air Quality Action Plan.

(2) The Plan shall—(a) subject to subsection (3), contain the information as required in the Fourth Schedule; (b) describe the measures intended to ensure, within the shortest possible time, compliance with the maximum concentration of an air [contaminant] as prescribed; (c) describe the measures intended to ensure, within the shortest [possible] time, compliance with any nuisance odour requirements as prescribed; (d) provide the period, not longer than three years, which the Plan is to cover; (e) provide any further information as the Minister may require.

(3) The Minister shall determine before the issuance of any notice, and the inspector shall advise, in the notice issued in subsection (1) whether air dispersion modelling in paragraph (3) of the Fourth Schedule is required to be continued in the said Plan.

(4) The inspector shall send the notice issued in subsection (1) by registered mail or electronic mail, and the notice shall—(a) request the period, not longer than three years, which the Plan is to cover; (b) request the date, not later than 90 days, (or such extended time as agreed between the inspector and the person who owns or operates the controlled plant), by which the Plan is to be sent to the inspector; (c) indicate the prescribed form and content required of the Plan; and (d) provide any other guidance or instruction concerning the Plan and next steps.

Air Quality Action Plan Consultations—
[section] 12B The Minister shall hold, for each Plan received by the deadline agreed in section 12A(4)(b) at least one public consultation, and such consultation may be held in respect of one Plan alone or in conjunction with other Plans.

Air Quality Action Plan Review and Approval—[section] 12C(1) A person required to submit a Plan under section 12A(1) shall prepare for the review and approval of the Minister a final draft Plan that takes into consideration public comments and proposals received during consultation, and implements comments of the Minister, if any; (2) The Minister may approve the final Plan where he is satisfied that— (a) sections 12A to 12C(1) have been complied with; and (b) the final Plan assesses the best available technologies to meet the purposes of the Act.

[Section] 12D . . . (Just a minute, Mr. Chairman.)

The Chairman: We are still on [clauses] 1 through 8. Am I correct, Minister?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes. Yes. Yes.

The Chairman: Carry on, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes, we are. I was just checking on something, Mr. Chairman. Just getting through [clause] 8.

The Chairman: No, no. It is fine.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: There are a number of . . . this is where some of the major clauses are that are being amended, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm. Thank you, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Publication of Air Quality Action Plan—[section] 12D, If the Minister approves a Plan under section 12C, he shall publish such Plan by notice in the *Gazette*.

That is [clauses] 1 through 8, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Minister.

I will ask, is there any other Member who wishes to speak on these particular clauses?

I recognise the Honourable Member Scott Pearman. Mr. Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I have just two questions arising in that cluster of clauses.

The Chairman: Carry on.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Firstly, under clause 2, and at the risk of injecting some levity into this debate, we note that there are trained inspectors, “means an inspector authorised in writing by the Minister as having been trained in the detection of nuisance odours.” And my question for the Minister is, Do we currently have

anyone on the Island who is trained in the detection of nuisance odours?

And Mr. Chairman, with your leave, while I am on my feet, shall I ask my second question in the cluster?

The Chairman: You may indeed. Carry on, Honourable Member.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you.

That is at clause 4—

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: —and it is over to the top of page 3 of the Bill, in respect to little (bb), and this is in relation to the issue of permits by the authority and it says, “subject to a condition that, in installing the controlled plant, the operator shall use the best available technologies for that industry or, where that is not practicable, reducing nuisance odours from the controlled plant.”

My question is a practical one. In terms of the authority saying, *You shall use the best available technologies*. And the applicant saying, *Well, that is not practicable so I won't*. What does “practicability” mean? Is that a question of sourcing the equipment or would that extend to an applicant saying, *Well, it is too expensive so I do not wish to*”?

So those are my two questions. And Mr. Chairman, again, with your leave, if it assists, and I note how thorough the Minister was being in the reading of every wording in the Bill, but I am happy to deal with the Bill by way of the Explanatory Memorandum clauses and go through them more quickly in that manner. If that is with you, Mr. Chairman, and the Minister.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Honourable Member. I am satisfied with what the Minister wishes to do.

Minister, you are satisfied with that?

Does any other Member wish to speak to clauses 1 through 8? Any questions to the Minister?

Minister, there are none.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: You may continue.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, I have a few answers I am prepared to give.

The Chairman: Please, go right ahead.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: There are three persons who have actually been trained. It was something that I did mention in my brief in some of the other answers. [They] are actually trained to operate the technology

and that will be essentially the inspectors under this new body of legislation. They were sent off to the United Kingdom for training and they are attached not only to my Minister, but also the Public Health Ministry as well. So there are three persons.

The other answer I believe is . . . Just a moment, if you can oblige me, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Carry on, Minister.

[Pause]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I am just awaiting answers from the technical officers. I did not want the listening audience to have the dead space, so . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Just for a moment, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: That's fine. We will not take the recommendation from the Honourable Member to sing. We will go right ahead with the answers from your technical officers.

Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you for obliging me, Mr. Chairman. I do appreciate it.

The best available technology from the standpoint of the explanation or the question by the Honourable Member, Environmental Authority to determine best technical . . . the best technology for the type of assessment that needs to be done, the size of the control plant used and the industry internationally.

So, the Environmental Authority will certainly provide guidance to that particular entity that is licensed. If, as the question arose by the Honourable Member, if they find it not practicable, we will find a way to use the most appropriate technology, and the Environmental Authority will assist in determining how that response will be.

An Hon. Member: Great.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Minister.

Do you wish to go ahead and move clauses 1 through 8.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I wish to move clauses 1 through 8 as written.

The Chairman: It has been moved by the Minister that clauses 1 through 8 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There is none.

It is agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 8 passed.]

The Chairman: Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I wish to now move clauses 9 through 17.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 9 through 17 now be looked at.

Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 9 amends the principal Act—(a) by inserting after subsection (1)(c), the following paragraph—(ca) that an Air Quality Action Plan approved under section 12C has not been followed; or (b) in subsection (2), by inserting after the words “or (d)” the words “or (e).”

Clause 10 of the principal Act is amended by inserting after section 16, sections 16A to 16G.

Statutory nuisances: 16A Without prejudice to Part IV and the First Schedule to the Public Health Act 1949, the matters specified in the Fifth Schedule of this Act are, for the purposes of the Act, statutory nuisances.

Duty to prevent nuisance: 16B Every person licenced to operate a controlled plant (“licensee”), shall have a duty—(a) to prevent a nuisance from arising at or being caused by that controlled plant; and (b) to abate any nuisance caused by or in existence at that controlled plant.

Order [of Minister] requiring abatement of nuisance: 16C(1) The Minister, if satisfied of the existence of a nuisance, may make an order requiring the abatement of that nuisance and cause the order to be served on the licensee. (2) An order made under subsection (1) may include—(a) a requirement that the licensee abate the nuisance within a reasonable time to be specified in the order; and (b) a requirement that any work which the Minister considers to be reasonably required to abate the nuisance or to prevent a recurrence of the nuisance be completed.

Complaint to court of summary jurisdiction: 16D(1) Where—(a) a licensee on whom an order has been served by the Minister under section 16C, fails to comply with any of the requirements of such order within the time specified in the order; or (b) the nuisance, although abated since the service of the order of the Minister is, in the opinion of the Minister, likely to recur, the Minister may cause a complaint about the nuisance to be made to a court of summary jurisdiction and the court may issue a summons requiring the licensee so served to appear before it.

(2) If the court is satisfied that the alleged nuisance exists, or that although abated it is likely to recur, the court may make an order against the licensee

who was summoned to appear before it—(a) requiring compliance with all or any of the requirements of the order of the Minister or the abatement of the nuisance by other means within a time specified in the order of the court and directing the execution of any works necessary for that purpose; or (b) prohibiting the recurrence of the nuisance and directing the execution of any works necessary to prevent recurrence; or (c) both requiring abatement and prohibiting the recurrence of the nuisance.

(3) Without prejudice to anything in subsection (2), the court—(a) may include in an order made under subsection (2) the imposition of a fine not exceeding \$20,000 on the person against whom it makes such order; and (b) may give directions as to the payment of all costs incurred up to the conclusion of the hearing or the making of the order under subsection (2) for the abatement or prevention of the recurrence of the nuisance.

(4) Before the court makes any order, it may, if it thinks fit, adjourn the hearing or further hearing of the summons until an inspection, investigation or analysis in respect of the alleged nuisance has been made by some person [competent] to do so, and the court may direct the payment of any costs incurred in making such inspection, investigation or analysis in like manner as though they were costs payable under subsection (3).

Punishment where order not complied with: 16E(1) Where a licensee who fails to comply with an order, or any requirement in such order, made by a court of summary jurisdiction under section 16D shall, unless he satisfies the court that he has used all due diligence to abate the nuisance or otherwise to comply with the order, commits a continuing offence and shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$5,000 for every day during which the offence continues. (2) Where a licensee fails to comply with an order made by a court of summary jurisdiction under section 16D, an inspector or any other person authorised by the Minister may enter the premises where the order relates as provided in section 18, and may abate the nuisance and do whatever is necessary for the due execution of the order, and the Minister may recover in the manner provided in section 16G the expenses incurred from the person on whom the order was made.

Nuisances caused by two or more licensees of controlled plants: 16F(1) Where any nuisance appears to be wholly or partly caused by the acts or defaults of two or more licensees of controlled plants, the Minister may take proceedings against any one or any two or more licensees and any one or more licensees—(a) may be ordered to abate the nuisance, so far as it appears to the court to be caused by his or their acts or defaults; or (b) may be prohibited from continuing any acts or defaults which contribute to the nuisance; or (c) may be fined or otherwise dealt with where the acts or defaults of any one of such persons

would not separately have caused a nuisance; and the costs arising from such proceedings may be apportioned in such manner as appears to the court to be fair and reasonable.

(2) Where any of the licensees whose act or default has caused or partly caused a nuisance proceeded against, they shall, without prejudice to any other remedy, be entitled to recover from any other licensees who were not so proceeded against, and by whose act or default the nuisance was caused or partly caused, a proportionate part of the costs of and incidental to such proceedings and of the costs of abating such nuisance and of any fine and costs ordered to be paid in such proceedings.

Now Members appreciate why I took so long to get this Bill together.

The Chairman: Absolutely.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: It is quite detailed and quite—

The Chairman: —There are those who feel you should do the abbreviated version, but carry on, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: No, I am going to do it because the public needs to know how much work went into this.

[Laughter]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I am not going to abate . . . the path I am going right now.

The Chairman: As you so wish, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. There is no abridging the issues that we have raised here.

[Costs and expenses: 16G(1)] All reasonable costs and expenses incurred—(a) in serving an order of the Minister under section 16C; or (b) in making a complaint or obtaining an order from the court of summary jurisdiction under section 16D; or (c) in carrying out such order of the court under section 16D(2), shall be deemed to be money paid for the use of and at the request of the licensee on whom the order is made or, if no order is made by a court under section 16D(2) but a nuisance is proved to have existed when the order of the Minister was served, then the costs and expenses incurred shall be deemed to be money paid for the use of and at the request of the licensee.

(2) Any costs and expenses incurred may be recovered, and the court shall have power to apportion such costs and expenses in such manner as appears just. (3) Where—(a) in accordance with section 16E(2) the Minister has himself abated a nuisance or done what is necessary to prevent a recurrence; and (b) the licensee on whom an order under section 16C

was served, does not pay the expenses incurred within six months after the completion of the abatement or other works, the Minister may recover such expenses reasonably incurred as a civil debt.”

Clause 11 amends section 17 of the principal Act by inserting after subsection (1) the following subsection—(1A) An appeal lies to the Court against an order, determination or other decision of the court of summary jurisdiction under section 16D.

Clause 12 amends section 26 of the principal Act by deleting “\$5,000” and substituting “\$20,000.”

Clause 13 amends the First Schedule of the principal Act and [is] amended as follows—(a) by renumbering the opening paragraph as paragraph 1; (b) by inserting after subparagraph (d) the following subparagraph—(da) a facility for the treatment or disposal of manure; (c) by inserting the following after paragraph 1— 2 Without prejudice to paragraph 1(ga), a facility for spray painting vehicles or machinery includes inflatable structures and open air spray painting operations that are performed on a retail sale or service basis or by way of commercial enterprise.

Clause 14 amends the Third Schedule to the principal Act in Part B—Licences as follows—(a) by inserting after paragraph 1(b)(ii) the following subparagraph—(iia) that the licensee did not comply with the Air Quality Action Plan approved under section 12C; (b) by inserting after paragraph 2(b)(i) the following subparagraph—(ia) that the licensee did not comply with the Air Quality Action Plan approved under section 12C;

[Inserts Fourth and Fifth Schedules] Clause 15 amends the principal Act by inserting after the Third Schedule, the following Schedules—

Fourth Schedule Information to be Included in the Air Quality Action Plan:

[Pause]

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Chairman, on the advice of council I am just going to stop here at [clause] 14 and move clauses 9 through 14.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: You want clauses 9 through 14?

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes.

The Chairman: Okay. That’s fine.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I would like to move clauses 9 through 14 as written.

The Chairman: The Minister wishes to move that. That will be fine. Before we do . . .

Minister, you will take questions between [clauses] 9 and 14.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 9 through 14?

I recognise Mr. Pearman. Mr. Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is just a point and it is . . . what clause would it be? It would be clause 10—

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: —which runs over three pages. And my question is on page 7 of the Bill.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Right in the middle where we are inserting a new [section] 16E(1), there is a paragraph there that deals with, commences “where a licensee who fails to comply” something has gone wrong in that paragraph. I am not quite sure what it is, but if the draftsmen would want to reread that paragraph . . . there is an extra “shall.” It doesn’t make sense is the short point.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: It is probably just a drafting point, but I highlight it because as it currently stands it does not make sense. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to clauses 9 through 14?

There are no other Members.
Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for the observation by the Honourable Member. I am sure that that can be amended. It is one of those things that just—

The Chairman: It is a technical matter.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, it is a technical amendment that can be dealt with.

But thank you for pointing it out, Honourable Member. Thank you. I appreciate it.

I will now continue from [clauses] 15 through 17.

The Chairman: No, you can move if you wish, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I’m sorry.

The Chairman: That's all right. You can move clauses 9 through 14.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for—

The Chairman: No, that's fine.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —the observation.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I wish to now move clauses 9 through 14 with the technical amendment considered.

The Chairman: Okay. That's fine.

It has been moved that clauses 9 through 14 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There is no objection.

Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 9 through 14 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, go right ahead.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman.

I will now move clauses 15 through 17.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban:

Clause 15 inserts a new Fourth Schedule and Fifth Schedule into the principal Act. The Fourth Schedule provides information to be included in an Air Quality Action Plan; the Fifth Schedule provides for the new statutory nuisances.

Clause 16 provides for transitional provisions.

Clause 17 provides for commencement by notice in the *Gazette*.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes my presentation of those clauses. I would like to before taking my seat thank the drafters in Chambers. We do have here the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and the main counsel who contributed to the drafting, Ms. Tannock, and I do very much appreciate the long hard work—

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —particularly Ms. Tannock has taken with this Bill and the aggravation that she had to be subjected to from the Ministry, but she withstood it and came forth with what I think is a very good work from Chambers. So I wish to thank her—

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —and the Chief Parliamentary Counsel and all who worked in Chambers on this. And of course, the team at DENR, led by Dr. Smith as well, on all the tireless work over many years working with Chambers and others and the public consultation to get this together. Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: And that was all for the Minister. That was [clauses] 14 *[sic]* through 17.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to those clauses 14 . . . or I should say [clauses] 15 through 17.

I recognise the Honourable Member, Mr. Scott Pearman. You have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is just one question that arises in relation to clause 15, although it does relate back also to a point at clause 10. And that is the introduction of the concept of a statutory nuisance. And the reason I refer to clause 10 is because that is where the statutory nuisance is under the Health Act. I would just like to clarify . . . I think the answer to my question is yes, but as the Minister is here with the benefit the parliamentary draftsmen, who I also extend thanks.

The creation of the statutory nuisance is not intended to remove common-law nuisance. It is simply there . . . and I see people nodding yes. It is simply there to supplement a separate statutory nuisance. I see people shaking their heads but . . . perhaps nodding their heads, rather. If the Minister could confirm that point. And that is my only question. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Honourable Member.

Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, to the Honourable Member's observations.

The Chairman: That's fine.

Thank you, Honourable Members.

Minister, would you go right ahead. You can do the Schedules and the preamble. Go right ahead.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Yes, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for your work and patience—

The Chairman: You can move the rest. Go ahead.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —through this.

I wish to now move that the preamble be approved.

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

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I'm sorry. Did I move clauses 15 through 17—

The Chairman: That's correct. I apologise.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: —as written.
I'm sorry, Mr. Chairman.
I move [clauses] 15 through 17.

The Chairman: That's fine.
It has been moved that clauses 15 through 17 be approved.
Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection. It is agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 15 through 17 passed.]

The Chairman: Go ahead, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.
Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection. It is agreed to.
Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: I do now move that the Bill be reported to the House with the technical amendments considered as well.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Minister.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.
Is there any objection to that motion?
There is no objection. It is agreed to.
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed *[sic]*.

[Motion carried: The Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

Proceedings resumed at 5:49 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CLEAN AIR AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 being reported to the House as printed?
There are none.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

Members, thank you for your participation today on that matter. We will now move on to the next item which is the second reading of the Companies Amendment Act 2024 in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Junior Minister, are you going to lead this?

Mr. Jache Adams: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Okay. You can start us off.

Mr. Jache Adams: All right.
Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Companies Amendment Act 2024 be now read for the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
Continue, Junior Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

COMPANIES AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Speaker, the Bill before the House is the Companies Amendment Act 2024. This Bill amends the Companies Act 1981 to remove the unintended exemption from annual corporate regulatory fees for certain classes of exempted companies and thereby ensures that these fees apply to all entities on Bermuda's corporate register over which the Registrar of Companies [ROC] has regulatory supervisory and compliance oversight as was intended and communicated since the announcement of these fees.

Mr. Speaker, Members will recall that on 8 March of this year, the Registrar of Companies (Annual Corporate Regulatory Fees) Act 2024 and the Registrar of Companies (Annual Corporate Regulatory Fees) (No. 2) Act 2024 were passed by the Legislature. In order to include corporate regulatory fee revenue in the 2023/24 Budget as forecast, the 2024 Acts took effect from the first reading in the House of Assembly on 9 February 2024, with the written consent of the Governor pursuant to section 2(1) of the Provisional Collection of Revenue Act 1975.

Mr. Speaker, Members will further recall that on the 28 June 2024 the Registrar of Companies Annual Corporate Regulatory Fees Amendment Act 2024 was passed to amend the commencement date of the 2024 Acts to 1 January 2024 and to allow for an exceptional payment deadline for 2024 only.

Mr. Speaker, subsequent to the passing of the 2024 Acts and the Amendment Act, an unintended exemption from corporate regulatory fees for certain classes of exempted companies was identified under section 131(2B) of the Companies Act 1981. The orig-

inal intent of this section was to immune certain classes of exempted companies from the standard annual fee based on accessible capital found in section 131 of the Companies Act 1981 in order to apply specified annual fee rates. As the corporate regulatory fee was added to section 131 of the Companies Act 1981, through the 2024 Acts, an unintended exemption from corporate regulatory fees was thus created.

Mr. Speaker, since the announcement of the annual corporate regulatory fees in the 2023/24 Budget Statement, the intention to apply these fees to all entities listed on Bermuda's corporate register, has been clearly articulated through statements made in this Honourable House, in the Senate and through industry notices distributed directly through the corporate register. This Bill simply achieves this aim by remedying the unintended exemption and ensuring that all entities are subject to corporate regulatory fees.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill amends the Companies Act 1981 to require that annual corporate regulatory fees be paid by the specified classes of exempted companies previously unintentionally excused from these fees. Further, the Bill validates any payment, validates any corporate regulatory fees collected by the ROC from the specified classes of the exempted companies prior to the passing of this Bill and sets the commencement date for the Bill at 1 January 2024 in line with the 2024 Acts.

Mr. Speaker, as a reminder to this Honourable House the driving force behind the introduction of these new regulatory fees is the expansion of the role performed by the ROC in recent years which has resulted in the need to hire significant numbers of additional skilled personnel and enhance infrastructure. The introduction of these regulatory fees was expected to add approximately \$6 million to the public purse each year.

Mr. Speaker, as of 15 November of this year approximately \$5.5 million of the projected \$6 million in the corporate regulatory fee revenue from 2024 had been collected. A breakdown of what proportion of this total has been collected from entities subject to the unintended exemption is unavailable. However, given that the exclusion applies to approximately 2,000 exempted companies on the corporate register, this figure will be significant.

Mr. Speaker, in summary, this Bill is a house-keeping one necessary to ensure that all exempted companies are subject to the corporate regulatory fee and to validate any payments received from exempted entities prior to the passing of this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, with those brief introductory remarks I now present the Bill entitled the Companies Amendment Act 2024 and welcome comments from other Honourable Members. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Junior Minister.

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

MP Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Honourable Junior Minister for his presentation.

As he has explained, there was an unintended exemption discovered in the Companies Act 1981, the primary Act, which was found at section 131(2B). And what that used to say, and what is now being removed, is that "A company liable to pay a fee pursuant to paragraph 1(A)(c) of Part II of the Fifth Schedule is not liable to pay any other fee prescribed by [subsection] (1)."

And so that is being removed to make clear that such company that does fall within 1(A)(c) of Part II, which is an exempted company . . . or would be an exempted company, is indeed, as the amending Act makes clear, liable to pay both the appropriate fee and the corporate regulatory fee.

The only points that I would raise in response to the Junior Minister would just be to ask the Junior Minister to confirm to this Honourable House that this change to fee structures for exempted companies is a matter about which consultation has been had and features industry support. I anticipate the answer from the Junior Minister is yes.

And then secondly, just a general concern. I mean, obviously, whenever we are here in this Honourable House putting up fees on businesses whether they be international or local, there is always a concern that we do not wish this jurisdiction to become too expensive.

And third, and finally before I sit down, I note that this is effectively a tidying up exercise from two previous points of legislation. And I just would like to raise a flag as I did during the last time this piece of legislation was before the House in relation to the February change which is that it is always dangerous and really unfair for us as legislators to retrospectively pass legislation. So, to stand here and say, *The fees are going to backdate to the 1st of January last year* is potentially unfair. Why? Because it moves the goal-post.

And so, whenever we can, and I am sure the Honourable Junior Minister would agree with my sentiment, we as legislators, no matter what side of the aisle we are on, should always try to not make last minute changes because these things are budgeted and prepared for well in advance. And when we do have to adjust fees, whether they be up or down, it is always best to do so with a forward look rather than a backward look.

So, with those few brief remarks, we support the Bill. And I thank the Honourable Junior Minister for his presentation.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any other Member?
Junior Minister.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Is your microphone on?

Mr. Jache Adams: Sorry.

Yes, to his first point, there has been consultation and for the large part these companies have been in agreement. [They] certainly agree that the concerns or taken into consideration adding to additional costs to doing business in Bermuda.

But with those brief comments, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you.
MP Simmons.
Thank you.

House in Committee at 5:59 pm

[Mr. Scott Simmons, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

COMPANIES AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Companies Amendment Act 2024](#).

I recognise the Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I move clauses 1 through 4.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be looked at.

Go ahead, Junior Minister. Clauses 1 through 4.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

Clause 2 amends the principal Act by repealing section 131(2B) and substituting it with a provision that requires exempted companies referred to in that section to be liable to pay both the appropriate fee and the corporate regulatory fee.

Clause 3 provides for the validation of payments of the corporate regulatory fee for the year 2024 by companies that paid the fee before the enactment of this Act.

Clause 4 provides that the Bill shall be deemed to have come into operation on 1 January 2024.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Junior Minister.

Would any other Member like to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

I recognise the Honourable Scott Pearman. Go right ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would love for the record to show that when the Junior Minister agreed with me earlier, he had his microphone off. So . . .

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Since he was kind enough to agree with me about the dangers of retrospective legislation, I am glad to put that on the record.

Just the one point and that is at clause 2. So, in effect, notwithstanding that it is retrospective back to 1 January 2024, anyone who has already paid will not have to pay a top-up. And I think that that is what (2B) is intending to achieve. So it is only the late payers who are going to get mopped up with the higher rate. But if the Honourable Junior Minister could kindly confirm, but I think that is the point here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Mr. Pearman.

[Would] any other Member would like to speak to clauses 1 through 4?

Any other Member?
Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In short, the Honourable Member is correct.

An Hon. Member: Very good.

The Chairman: Junior Minister, I believe that concludes clauses 1 through 4. Go right ahead. You can pass your . . . you can go right ahead.

Mr. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I move the preamble be approved. I'm sorry . . .

The Chairman: Clauses 1 through 4.

Mr. Jache Adams: Oh, sorry.

I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There is no objection.

Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]

The Chairman: Go ahead, Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

Agreed to.

Go ahead, Junior Minister.

Mr. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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

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

Is there any objection to that motion?

There is no objection.

Agreed to. The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

Thank you, Junior Minister.

[Motion carried: The Companies Amendment Act 2024 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

[Pause]

Proceedings resumed at 6:03 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

COMPANIES AMENDMENT ACT 2024 ACT 2024

[No audio]

The Speaker: Sorry.

Members, we have now concluded that matter and we are now moving on to the next item which is the second reading of the Customs Department Amendment Act 2024 in the name of the Minister of National Security, but the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors is doing it on behalf of the Minister who is unwell today.

Minister, would you like to present it?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Customs Department Amendment Act 2024 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

Continue, Minister.

BILL

SECOND READING

CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members are requested to now give consideration to the Bill entitled Customs Department Amendment Act 2024.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill proposes to amend the Customs Department Act of [1952], the principal Act, to empower the Collector of Customs to cooperate with domestic authorities and international counterparts and address specific deficiencies as identified by the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force [CFATF], assessors in Bermuda's 2020 Mutual Evaluation Report. These deficiencies identified by CFATF assessors relate to the retention, use and safeguarding of custom's declaration information and other information obtained from custom's operations.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes form a vital part of Government's continuing efforts to align Bermuda's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing legislative framework [(AML/ATF)] with the requirements stipulated in the Financial Action Task Force international standards when combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism and proliferation.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that in January 2020 the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force, of which Bermuda is a member, published Bermuda's Mutual Evaluation Report in which it recognised Bermuda's high degree of compliance with the FATF standards and effectiveness of our system for combatting money laundering and terrorist financing. Nevertheless, Bermuda received only a partial compliant rating for FATF Recommendation 32.

Mr. Speaker, Recommendation 32 requires countries to have effective systems in place to detect and prevent the movement across borders of illicit proceeds of crime in the form of cash and negotiable instruments. Countries are also required to have in place adequate measures to enable effective cross border cooperation between counterpart border protection authorities in different countries.

Mr. Speaker, through the provisions of this Bill Government seeks to achieve full compliance with Recommendation 32 during . . . (excuse me) FATF 5th Round of Mutual Evaluation of Bermuda or submissions to outline how Bermuda has addressed the technical requirement in any recommendation must be submitted by Bermuda to the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force Secretariat beginning in September 2026.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill proposes to amend the principal Act with new provisions giving the Customs Department legal authority to cooperate with counterpart customs authorities and where appropriate other

overseas law enforcement authorities, including the authority to enter into arrangements with counterparts or with regional or global custom organisations and law enforcement authorities.

For the purposes of cooperation, this authority will also empower custom officers in the discharge of the statutory functions to use information obtained from the counterpart customs authorities or other overseas law enforcement authorities. Under the Bill the Customs Department is required to exercise such powers with foreign parties only where there is a treaty or agreement that provides to enable the exercise of such powers.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also proposes to amend the principal Act to provide the Customs Department with legal authority to cooperate with domestic competent authorities such as the Financial Intelligence Agency and the Bermuda Police Service and to enter into arrangements for cooperation with them or any specified domestic authorities as provided in the Bill. This authority will empower customs officers in the exercise of their custom functions to use the information obtained from domestic authorities in the discharge of their statutory functions.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill further proposes to amend the principal Act to provide the Customs Department with authority to

- share information and intelligence with counterpart custom authorities, other overseas law enforcement authorities and with appropriate domestic authorities;
- to require the Customs Department to retain the records and other information obtained from customs operations for a minimum period of six years;
- to specify data protection and confidentiality requirements in relation to information collected by the Customs Department;
- to allow the Customs Department to charge an administrative fee for the sharing of customs information;
- to empower the Minister to make regulations; and
- to provide savings of extant agreements for national and international cooperation.

Mr. Speaker, finally, the Bill makes consequential amendments to the Revenue Act making explicit provision that the Customs . . . Collector of Customs declaration notices do not require parliamentary scrutiny and adding the principal Act to the list of outlying enactments in the Revenue Act. In addition, the opportunity has been taken to do a little housekeeping, clarifying the application of the charge for the manual input of Bermuda Customs Declaration as provided in the Government Fees Regulations 1976.

I will comment further on the measures of the Bill in Committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

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

Opposition Whip, you have the floor.

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

This is typically not my forte but having read through the Bill and standing in for the more substantive Shadow Minister and of course we have someone standing in, the Honourable Member Tinee [Furbert], for Minister Weeks of National Security.

I did not have in particular any major issues particularly with this Bill. I guess as I read through the Bill I was . . . it seemed like some of the stuff would have already been in place. So it seems like it is a long time coming. I don't know. With these kinds of arrangements that we are talking about in cooperations, I am sure that we have been getting requests all along from police and other organisations abroad, whether it was back in 9/11 times where it was a pretty scary time, or whether it was through COVID-19 and the like.

So, one of the general things that I was a bit . . . or seemed to be a bit general in its scope was these terms of conditions or cooperation. So I don't know . . . I don't know with these third parties who all these third parties are that we are actually dealing with. It would be nice to know who some of these third parties are that are actually requesting information.

We can take a guess based on some of the stuff that has already been said in the brief that the Minister has given us. But who exactly are these third parties? And what is the nature of some of the requests that we might be getting that we now have this Bill coming into play that says that we now have to have a cooperation agreement of sorts.

And then the other question is, So, with each entity is there a separate agreement that is different from the other or is it based on request? With every request that comes, then what are those terms and conditions? And how will they differ from any other?

So, in general terms, we recognise that this has to be done. But again, when you start talking about these agreements, I would have thought that these agreements would already be in place. So, where are they? And the customs declaration person who is in charge of this . . . I still was a bit unclear as to exactly who is in charge of these cooperations on the customs side. Like who is that? It is just an agent or is it the director? It was not clear exactly who would be making these decisions.

In addition to that, after having read through the Bill and trying to understand a bit more of what it is that we are doing, I am sure that this is bringing us up to date, quite frankly, with what is going on around the world. And certainly we want to be up to speed. How does the particular customs person, whoever that is, make the determination as to whether or not a fee is applied to a request? So what is the criteria that is

being set out for the request? You know, I am trying to get an example from the Minister maybe of one that would not require a fee or another request that might require a fee.

We know that clause 14 talks about the PATI . . . it is opened to PATI requests and the like. And I may just save that question for the . . . actually, I might as well just ask it now and get it out of the way. The . . . the . . . I am not sure. You know, with the clause about PATI, I would assume that there are certain parts of information that, you know, folks just can't . . . if somebody wants to know what I declared when I flew into the Island, I mean, if somebody puts a PATI request in, that seems a bit futile and silly, what would warrant a PATI request in this particular area? I am not sure. Or who would be putting in a PATI request, quite frankly, toward this type of information?

When you start talking about money laundering and the like, I would assume that the authorities abroad and locally would be working together and I assume that in the past that they, I guess, we have done it pro bono and sharing information back and forth. It looks like we are putting a framework together now that allows for a fee to be levied on these requests. I don't know if we make requests abroad but if we make a request abroad do we have to pay a fee as well in gathering intelligence information?

So, again, we [have] no issues with this Bill. Just some clarification in specific areas as to these terms of cooperation or these arrangements that are put in place. Is it a standard-type form that we are using? Or again, is this going to be more specific to each request? Understanding that each request may in nature be similar, but it does not really define in the Bill itself how we are going to do that and who is the person who is (within customs) that is actually making the decisions on what should be charged, what shouldn't be charged, what organisation are we freely going to give information to?

So, with that in mind, I probably only have one or two questions during [Committee] period but this is welcoming. I mean, there is nothing controversial really about this here. It does look like it is solidifying customs declaration when it comes to information. So I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

There are none. Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't know if any of the technical officers . . . if they are . . . I just want to give them time. Yes?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Okay.

[Pause]

The Speaker: Members, we are just seeking your leniency in a moment that both the Minister and the Shadow Minister were out today with health matters. And we have the Acting Minister trying to lead the matter. So she is just getting the necessary information.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the brief, in regard to Bermuda's status as it relates to the Caribbean Financial Action Task Force and the Bermuda Mutual Evaluation Report this Bill is coming into play because Bermuda received only a partial compliant rating for the FATF Recommendation 32. So this is, yes, a long time coming.

And we thank the Honourable Member for his questions in regard to who they are, who the agencies are. Are they parties . . . entities who will be making such requests and that could be any law enforcement agency, local or overseas. The question was, Is there a separate agreement for each entity? Yes. Each agreement is customs and separate. It can be separate both local and overseas parties. But each agreement is separate. Some of these agreements also are already in place.

What would warrant a PATI request? Anything, but not personal information. There was a question, I believe in regard to who is making the decision to give the information . . . would that be . . . I don't want to answer out of line. Is it the Collector of Customs? Okay. Collector of customs. In regard to the question as it relates to a fee. No fee for parties listed in the new section 8(2) but fees will apply when the request is onerous and that is a request from overseas law enforcement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Would you like to move us into Committee?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, I would.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that the Bill be committed, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

MP Simmons. MP . . . There you go.

MP Simmons, how are you this evening?

Mr. Scott Simmons: Good, sir.

The Speaker: Good. You can take the Chair.

[Crosstalk]

House in Committee at 6:21 pm

[Mr. Scott Simmons, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL**CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT AMENDMENT ACT 2024**

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Customs Department Amendment Act 2024](#).

I call on the Minister in charge to proceed.
Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that clauses 1 . . . I would like to move clauses 1 through 5.

The Chairman: The Minister [would] like to move clauses 1 through 5.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: That's all of them.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Clauses 1 through 5 is the completion of it. Go ahead, Minister. [Clauses] 1 through 5.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Mr. Chairman, this Bill seeks to amend the Customs Department Act 1952 with respect to information collected by the Customs Department, to provide for the restrictions that apply to arrangements of cooperation concerning information collected by the Customs Department and to provide for related and connected purposes.

Clause 1 provides a citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 amends section 1 of the Customs Department Act 1952 to define certain expressions used in the Bill. Namely, "customs declaration," "customs information," and "overseas law enforcement agency."

Clause 3 amends section 4C of the Customs Department Act 1952 to repeal and replace the definition of "Bermuda Customs Declaration."

Clause 4 inserts sections 7 through 16 in the Customs Department Act 1952 as follows:

- Section 7 imposes a general obligation on the Customs Department not to disclose information that it has received in the performance of its functions.
- Section 8 makes provision for permitted disclosure of customs information and any limitations on such disclosures. Information may be

disclosed for the purposes of the enabling or assisting the Customs Department to discharge their powers and duties or for the purposes of another agency specified in that section to discharge its functions, and for purposes related to anti-money laundering or anti-terrorist financing.

- Section 9 makes provision for the Collector of Customs to enter into arrangements for cooperation with authorities in Bermuda or elsewhere.
- Section 10 imposes a restriction on the further disclosure of information to third parties. Information disclosed by the Customs Department cannot be further disclosed to third parties without the consent of the Collector of Customs.
- Section 11 requires the Customs Department to retain customs information for the minimum period of six years.
- Section 12 provides that the Collector of Customs may charge an administrative fee for the sharing of customs information, and such fee shall be prescribed in the Government Fees Regulations 1976.
- Section 13 preserves protections set forth in the Personal Information Protection Act 2016 with respect to personal information related to individuals.
- Section 14 provides for the application of the Public Access to Information Act 2010.
- Section 15 provides the Minister with the power to make regulations.
- Section 16 provides for savings of agreements for national and international cooperation between the Collector of Customs and any other party for the purpose of enabling or assisting with the performance of the functions of that party or duties of the department.

Clause 5 provides for consequential amendments to be made to the Revenue Act 1898 and the Government Fees Regulations 1976.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

That is clauses 1 through 4 [sic]. Would any other Member—

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Five.

The Chairman: —wish to speak to . . . I'm sorry. [Clauses] 1 through 5.

Would any other Member wish to speak to clauses 1 through 5?

I recognise the Honourable Member Mr. Cannonier. You have the floor.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Under clause 4, section . . . let me just go to it. Section 12, first, where it says “provides that the Collector of Customs may charge an administrative fee . . .”. And we heard earlier in the general reply that the fee would apply to whether . . . to the condition that if it is onerous that a fee would apply. I am just wondering what are the parameters set that the Collector of Customs could use to determine what is onerous. Is it kind of like similar to the PATI request? Over 16 hours, or whatever the case may be? The answer was given that if it is “deemed onerous.” Do they have a parameter that allows for the ease of that Collector of Customs to be able to say, *Okay. This fits in that category?*

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak to clauses 1 through 5?

I recognise the Honourable Scott Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 4 . . . This is just again one technical point for the draftsmen. At page 5, in the middle of the page, subsection (4), so it is subsection (4) of the new inserted [section] 9(4). It is where the definition appears, “In this section, an ‘international arrangement of cooperation . . .’” Elsewhere in the Bill you say international arrangement *for* cooperation. So, if you are defining it as “of” it should be “of” throughout and not “for.” Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Honourable Member.

Any other Honourable Member wish to speak to clauses 1 through 5?

Mr. Cannonier.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, just one more. Under clause 4, section 9, where it says, “[M]akes provision for the Collector of Customs to enter into arrangements for cooperation with authorities . . .” Just curious, how was that being done before this was put in place or enacted? It is kind of arbitrary and open, so . . . how was that being done before? That it would warrant that now under section 9, “[M]akes provision for the Collector of Customs to enter into arrangements . . .” I mean, we have been doing that I am sure forever, right?

The Chairman: Mm-hmm. Thank you, Honourable Member Cannonier.

Any other Member wish to speak to clauses 1 through 5?

There is no other Member.

Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will just wait again for the technical—

The Chairman: Go right ahead.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —but I need clarification from MP Pearman in regard to [clause] 4 on page 5.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: You said “international arrangement . . . for”?

The Chairman: [Clause 4] through 5?

Mr. Scott Pearman: I am happy to clarify with your leave, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Go right ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: The point was at page 5, under newly . . . so it is clause 4. Clause 4 commences on page 2. And it inserts a whole tranche, [sections] 7 through 16.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And the insertion I am referring to is [section] 9 at page 4. If we go over the page under [section] 9, is subsection (4) and it is there that we see a defined term “an international arrangement of cooperation.” Because that is a defined term all the other references should say international arrangement *of* cooperation and some of them say [international arrangement] *for* and some of them say *of*. But it is a defined term, and I think it should be consistent throughout.

Again, it is just a technical point which I am sure someone can correct.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Pearman.

Any other Members?

I recognise the Honourable Minister. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will answer the question in regard to clause 4, section 12. There was a question around the parameters set for fees for the Collector of Customs. The customs will amend the task and if it causes . . . sorry. They will review the task and if it causes overtime or distracts from normal work an estimated administrative fee will be determined and the fee will reflect the cost to customs in hours and that will be charged at a level similar to what is charged for customer service.

There was a question in regard to section 9. How was the cooperation between agencies been done before? In accordance with the written agreements between the parties, so there is no change. The process has now just been codified.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.
That concludes all answers, Minister?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes.

The Chairman: Very well. You may go ahead and move your clauses, Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I now move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: We will move all clauses, clauses 1 through 5.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that clauses 1 through 5 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 5 be approved.
Is there any objection to that motion?
There is no objection.
Agreed to.
Go ahead, Minister.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 5 passed.]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.
Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection. It is agreed to.
Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed or amended.

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.
Thank you, Minister.

[Motion carried: The Customs Department Amendment Act 2024 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

Proceedings resumed at 6:31 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Speaker: Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Customs Department Amendment Act 2024 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported as printed.

Thank you, Members, for your participation in that matter.

The next item before us this evening is the second reading of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 in the name of the Premier and Minister of Finance.

Premier.

[Pause]

Hon. E. David Burt: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good evening.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 be now read the second time.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue, Premier.

BILL

SECOND READING

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2024

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

Mr. Speaker, I present to the Honourable House the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024, which I will refer to hereafter as “the Bill.”

The Bill amends the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 (which I will refer to hereafter as “the Act”) to clarify the securities that the Bermuda Monetary Authority (which I will refer to hereafter as “the Authority”) is permitted to invest in to provide for a waiver reduction of fees payable in relation to the innovation hub and to amend the Fourth and Fifth Schedules of the Act with respect to fees.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda’s financial services sector is subject to the regulation and supervision of the Authority. The Authority was established under the Act. The Authority operates pursuant to the Act which provides it with a number of principle objects including supervision, regulation and inspection of financial institutions operating in or from within Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority is mandated to act as an advisor to the Minister of Finance on policy mat-

ters related to any financial institution. Accordingly, the Authority proposes laws where it can do so appropriately and consistently with its function under the Act.

Mr. Speaker, the key highlights of the Bill before us are as follows: First of many, is the definition of “specified securities.”

Mr. Speaker, section 19 of the Act requires the Authority to maintain a reserve of external local assets that shall be in value not less than an amount equivalent to 50 per cent of the total liability due the Authority in relation to the face value of currency notes and coins in circulation. Members are advised that as a matter of practice the Authority has been keeping reserve of external assets above 100 per cent for the past five years. Accordingly, the Authority maintains reserve of external and local assets and ensures that they are invested prudently in accordance with the requirements of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, in 2022, the Act was amended to update the range of permitted securities in which reserves could be held. This change allows the Authority’s board of directors through its investment committee to adjust such securities as required to react to future market conditions in accordance with the Act.

The Authority proposes to further refine the types of securities that the Authority may purchase and hold by expressly precluding investments in firms that the Authority regulates.

Mr. Speaker, Members are advised that as a practical matter the Authority’s current investment guidelines preclude the Authority from investing in shares of any company that it regulates. To avoid any doubt, the Authority has never traded in equities, currently has no appetite to do so, and has never sought to invest in firms that it regulates.

Mr. Speaker, it has not, nor has it ever been the Authority’s intention to run the risk of having conflicts of interest regarding its investments. This change will clarify the Authority will not invest in any entity that it regulates.

Moving on to provision for waiver or reduction of fees payable in relation to the innovation hub. Mr. Speaker, the Authority recognises the importance of innovation in the financial services industry and the critical role that innovation plays in promoting efficiency and enhancing competitiveness in the market. The innovation hub was set up to foster such innovation as an option for companies looking to test new technologies or business models. And I must add, Mr. Speaker, it has been rather successful.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority generally has the power to reduce or waive fees in the sectors that it regulates. However, this is not currently the case with the innovation hub. The Authority believes it is appropriate that such a power exist within the innovation hub so that it may be exercised at the discretion of the Authority upon request from the applicant. In addition

to the benefits for the marketplace [in] Bermuda, the Authority also benefits from the innovation hub by learning about potential new products and business models including how to regulate them effectively. These innovations often come from startups where funding can be limited. And the Authority would not wish to see innovations stifled where it may otherwise have been possible. Therefore, in certain circumstances it would be beneficial for the Authority to have the power to reduce or waive fees in this realm.

Mr. Speaker, moving on to proposed changes to the Fourth and Fifth Fee Schedules of the Act. It is important that the fees charged by the Authority reflect and align with the cost of appropriately overseeing regulated financial institutions and enable the efficient facilitation of supervisory activities. The key highlights of the fee-related amendments are as follows when dealing with the Fourth Schedule of the Act in respect of the Investment Business Act.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority proposes to introduce a \$2,840 fee in respect of an application for a recognition certificate and a \$10,000 annual business fee for recognised bodies payable following the commencement of the Investment Business Amendment Act. The proposed fees consider the existing fees for investment providers under the Investment Business Act, which I will refer to as the IBA, going forward, and the nature of regulated activities of recognised bodies. There is currently one recognised body in Bermuda; namely, the Bermuda Stock Exchange which has been kept up to date on these fees.

Mr. Speaker, in 2022, the Authority signalled to the market that the fees applicable to certain investment providers would be kept under review given the nature and complexity of the products and service offerings of an in-scope entity. In line with this, the Authority proposes to increase the application annual fees for investment provider’s licence pursuant to the IBA, offering over-the-counter [OTC] leverage products to retail clients to \$25,000 and \$100,000, respectively. Currently, the application fee and the annual business fee are \$2,840 and \$13,560, respectively.

Mr. Speaker, there are several reasons for these proposed targeted IBA fee increases. Most notably consistency with comparable fees and other regulatory sectors and to better align the fees in question with the associated regulatory and supervisory activities required of the Authority.

Mr. Speaker, the current IBA annual fee applicable to investment providers offering OTC leverage products to retail clients is not aligned with comparable annual fee under the Digital Asset Business Act [DABA] framework where the activities are the same under both regimes but relates to digital assets and investments. For example, Mr. Speaker, an investment provider offering OTC leverage products to retail clients licenced both under the IBA and Digital Asset Business Act would be subject to an annual fee of

\$13,560 under the IBA and a minimum fee of \$100,000 under the Digital Asset Business Act.

Mr. Speaker, the current fee does not sufficiently account for supervisory efforts in respect of providers of OTC leverage products to retail clients given the inherently high risk associated with this activity. Recent updates to the IBA include enhanced requirements for providers of OTC leverage products with retail clients. These enhanced requirements contributed to the elevation and the nature and the extent to supervisory activities relating to these firms, including the expertise required to ensure effective supervision.

Given the retail client profile and the complexity of the products offered, for example, OTC leverage products, there is a need for more frequent supervisory reviews relative to licensees whose investment activities do not relate to derivatives.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed annual business fee more accurately reflects the supervisory efforts in this area and brings it into line with that charge under the digital asset business regime for similar activities.

Moving on to the Fourth Schedule of the Act, Mr. Speaker, with respect for the Investment Funds Act 2006. Mr. Speaker, as an administrative measure, the Fourth Schedule under the heading Investment Funds Act 2006, is proposed to be amended in paragraph 10. Currently this paragraph applies to transaction fees for section 25, changes and notifications, and section 6, notifications. The notification of exclusion under section 6 was repealed some time ago. Therefore, this reference should be removed and the inclusion of section 8(A)(8) changes should be added in its place. These changes pertain to the requirements for registered professional Class B funds to obtain prior approval for changes to the director or service provider.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a new provision. However, not including the fee on the Schedule was an oversight and this amendment will align this section with similar provisions in the Investment Funds Act 2006 that incur a processing fee in relation to notification of changes. The transaction fee itself remains unchanged at \$310.

Moving on to the Fourth Schedule of the Act in respect to the Proceeds of Crime (Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2008.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority proposes to revise the fees to more accurately reflect the actual cost of supervision. The fees for non-licensed persons will be amended to a registration fee of \$150 and an annual fee of \$1,000. Currently the application fee and the annual fee are \$108 and \$850, respectively. This increase is very modest, reflecting current economic conditions and the fact that these fees have not been modified for several years.

Moving to the Fourth Schedule of the Act in respect to the innovation hub.

Mr. Speaker, additionally, the changes described previously in relation to the innovation hub the Authority intends to reduce the application extension fees for the innovation hub to \$1,000 to reduce any possible barriers to innovation. Currently, the application fee is \$3,000 and the 12-month extension fee is \$1,500.

Moving on to the Fifth Schedule of the Act with respect to the Insurance Act 1978.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority is making some clarificatory—yes, that is what I said, *clarificatory*—changes to the wording used in the metrics for fee calculations for Class 3A, 3B, and 4 insurers and designated insurers registered to carry run-off general business on behalf of an insurance group in accordance with section 27B of the Insurance Act 1978. (Quite a mouthful, Mr. Speaker.)

The Speaker: Hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: Specifically, a note has been added to clarify that the higher fee amount would apply when a registrant falls into more than one tier. The proposed changes should avoid any inconsistencies or uncertainty in determining the correct tier and associated fee. The respective fee amounts themselves remain unchanged. The fees range from \$24,550 to \$446,800, depending on the class of the insurer and the level of their gross reserves and assets. The proposed changes codify the approach that has been followed in practice.

Mr. Speaker, the Authority has corresponded directly with BILTR [Bermuda International Long Term Insurers and Reinsurers] and ABIR [Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers] to inform them of these changes. The Authority also proposes to make some administrative changes to the Fifth Schedule relating to the Classes IIGB and IILT. And, Mr. Speaker, this is Innovative and Insured General Business and Innovative Insurer Long Term, part of our FinTech staple. And I just got updated with licensing statistics and note that there are 14 companies registered in these categories.

Now I will move on to this: these changes were applicable and to clarify the Note pertaining to which supplementary annual fees under [paragraph] 7A and 7B of the Schedule are payable by non-resident insurance undertakings. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Monetary Authority always consults on changes and these proposals that I have mentioned were consulted on via Consultation Paper issued by the Authority on 10 July 2024 which was accompanied by an illustrative draft Bill.

Mr. Speaker, no objections were received in relation to this consultation nor were any informal representations made to the Authority during the consultation period.

Mr. Speaker, the changes will come into force on 1 January 2025. And in closing, I would like to

thank all of those persons within the Authority, the Attorney General's Chambers, the Ministry of Finance, and the private sector who have assisted with the development of this Bill today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

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

Thank you to the Honourable Minister of Finance for that presentation. And I echo his thanks to all the support teams who put together the Bill.

I have very little to say on the Bill. The amendment is to the 1969 primary Act. Really, it does three substantive points. And the Premier has taken us through those three substantive points at great length, so I do not really need to. But just in summary, one is to clarify the definition of "specified securities." I must say I am delighted to see that because it came up during a previous debate and I believe at the risk of tooting my own horn, I was the one who said, *Well, if they are not going to invest then let's put it in legislation.*

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Listen, you know, I can admit when someone gets it right. Well done!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you. Thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Toot. Exactly.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: A choir of Christmas trumpets on behalf of the BMA.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: So that is one.

Two, the waiver or reduction for the innovation hub. That is self-explanatory. There is an opportunity either for an exemption or a reduction. I have one question in Committee when we get there.

And then the third substantive thing it is doing is to revise certain fees payable and the Premier has already informed this Honourable House . . . excuse me, the Minister of Finance has already confirmed to this Honourable House that there has been consultation with industry. And he did not say what letters back

from industry said, and so I suggest we will leave it right there.

So, with those three points, I believe that is all you have to hear in the debate from me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

None.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, you didn't even give anyone a chance to say if they wanted to speak on it.

The Speaker: Premier, there was no one looking this way at all.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am teasing you.

The Speaker: There were none looking this way.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member who just took his seat did a very good job of blowing his own horn and I will say that I guess that defeats the arguments of which he always makes that the Government does not listen. We listen when things make sense. And that is the purpose of democracy.

That much being said, I thank the Honourable Member for his support of this Bill, and I move that the Bill be committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

MP Scott Simmons, will you take the Chair for us, please?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

House in Committee at 6:48 pm

[Mr. Scott Simmons, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024](#).

I call on the Minister in charge to proceed.
Minister, you have the floor.

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

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

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses . . . that clause—

Hon. E. David Burt: Clauses 1 through 6.

The Chairman: All of them? You are doing all [clauses] 1 through 6?

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes, please.

The Chairman: [Move all clauses] 1 through 6.

Agreed to. It is agreed.
Go ahead, Premier.

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

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

Clause 2 amends section 1 of the principal Act in the definition of “specified securities” to exclude investments in securities issued by financial institutions that are registered or licensed by the Authority.

Clause 3 amends section 20H of the principal Act to make provision for the fees payable in relation to the innovation hub to be waived or reduced.

Clause 4 and Schedule 1 have effect with respect to amendments to the Fourth Schedule to the Act in relation to fees under the Investment Business Act 2003, the Investment Funds Act 2006, the Proceeds of Crime (Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorist Financing Supervision and Enforcement) Act 2008 and in relation to the Innovation hub.

Clause 5 and Schedule 2 have effect with respect to amendments to the Fifth Schedule to the Act regarding the revision of certain fees under the Insurance Act 1978 for the years 2025 and 2026.

Clause 6 provides for commencement of the Act.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Minister.

[Would] any other Member like to speak to clauses 1 through 6?

The Honourable Scott Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: I think I have broken my microphone. There you go, Mr. Chairman.

Yes, two quick questions.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Goodness me. I think I've struck a nerve. I was actually commending the BMA for their diligence.

Just two quick questions and these may sound like blindingly obvious questions. The answers to them both, I think, is yes, but someone might have to come look at this afterwards and try and figure out what it means.

So, the question first is under clause 3. Here it is: In relation to the hub, you can have an exemption, you can have a reduction and if you want to the Authority may oppose any conditions as we can see it. Clause 3(3). And then it says, “as it may determine appropriate.”

And then we have subsection (4) and “the Authority shall not grant an exemption from, or reduction of, any fee payment under subsection (1) unless it is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so having regard to the nature, scale and complexity of the business carried on, or to be carried on, by the undertaking or applicant.”

My question simply is, that last little bit of subsection (4) is the legal test that the BMA will apply when considering whether or not to impose a condition in relation to any exemption or reduction or to grant any exemption or reduction. And I see people nodding. So the answer to the question is yes.

And the second question I think is just as easy. It is clauses 4 and 5, which says that the Schedules under [clauses] 4 and 5, respectively, have effect. I assume, without knowing, that that means that they . . . where it says “has effect” in each case. “[H]as effect” then relates down to clause 6, which says, the 1 January 2025. And so, when it comes into operation on 1 January 2025, it is at that date that each of the two Schedules shall have effect.

Thank you. Those are my questions.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Mr. Pearman.

Any other Member have any further comments [to] clauses 1 through 6?

There is no other Member.

I recognise the Premier.

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

Mr. Chairman, the answer to both the questions is yes. That is fine. I am just a little bit confused so I might have to seek assistance from the Clerk. As I am just trying to figure out whether or not I have to move the Schedules even though the Schedules are mentioned in clauses 4 and 5. Do I have to move them afterward? But we will figure it out. Okay.

The Chairman: Mm-hmm.

Hon. E. David Burt: That was the one reason why I was looking so confused.

The Chairman: Go right ahead. That's fine, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right.

So, Mr. Chairman, seeing nothing further and having been able to answer the Learned Member's questions, that the answer to both his questions is yes. So, in case someone looks back in the Hansard they can go ahead and, you know, in case he decides to challenge us in court under the wonderful Conyers, Dill and Pearman he will be able to do such a thing.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: Sorry . . . Conyers.

The Chairman: He wouldn't do that, Premier.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, you never, never know. You never know.

But with that, Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 6 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 6 be approved.

Is there any objection to the motion?
No objection. It is agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 6 passed.]

The Chairman: Go ahead, Premier.

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

I will then also move that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection. Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Schedules 1 and 2 passed.]

The Chairman: Go ahead, Premier.

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

Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

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

Is there any objection to that motion?
No objection. It is agreed to.
Proceed, Premier.

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

I move that the Bill be now reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: Thank you, very much, Premier.

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

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. It is agreed to.

The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

[Pause]

Proceedings resumed at 6:55 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The Speaker: Good evening, Members.

Are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 being reported to the House as printed?

There are none.

The Bill has been reported to the House as printed.

Members, we thank you for your participation in that matter. And that matter actually brings us to a conclusion of the business for today.

Premier, would you . . . Members, rather, Ministers, we will do the third readings now. And the first third reading this morning was in the name of the Junior Minister with the Corporate . . . Okay. There you go, Junior Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Mr. Jache Adams: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 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.]

BILL

THIRD READING

CORPORATE ENTITIES (MISCELLANEOUS) AMENDMENT ACT 2024

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

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 now read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Corporate Entities (Miscellaneous) Amendment Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you.
The next Minister.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Third readings now, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: Yes. Yes, sir.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Oh, okay. Yes.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
Continue, Deputy Premier.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

CLEAN AIR AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Bill has been now read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Clean Air Amendment Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: The Companies Amendment Act. Junior Minister.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Mr. Jache Adams: Good evening, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Companies Amendment Act 2024 be now read the third time by its title only.

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

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue, Junior Minister.

BILL

THIRD READING

COMPANIES AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Mr. 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 now read a third time by its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Companies Amendment Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister for Youth, Social Development and Seniors, will you do the National Security?

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled Customs Department Amendment Act 2024 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?
There are none.
Continue, Minister.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, 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 its title only and has now passed.

[Motion carried: The Customs Department Amendment Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Premier.

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 Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 be now read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?
No.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

The Speaker: Continue, Premier.

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

BILL

THIRD READING

BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY AMENDMENT ACT 2024

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 be now read for 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 Bermuda Monetary Authority Amendment Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

SESSIONAL STANDING COMMITTEES

The Speaker: Premier, before I call on you to do that matter that takes us to the next stage, I am just going to seek the indulgence of the House. This morning

under the Announcements there was a matter that I intended to have done that unfortunately because of the personal matter that some of you know about that caused me to be late this morning, it did not get done. And I have noticed that it still did not get prepared. So I am going to do it now because it should be done before the House rises.

And that is to announce that the Sessional Committees of the House that have to be done at the start of each session be named. And those are the **Standing Orders Committee**, the **House and Grounds Committee** and the **Regulations Committee**. And [these are] being retained with the same Members from last session.

The new **Oversight Committee** has also been named. And I will make sure that all of that is put on the website for everyone to see.

And I would also make note that the report of the Standing Orders Committee that was tabled today addresses the updates in the Standing Orders Regulations around the function of the committees and clarifies the abilities of the committees to act in the full manner in which they are entitled to act.

So you may want to note the report in its fullness. That is also up on SharePoint.

Thank you, Members.
Mr. Premier.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Mr. Speaker, I move that this House do now adjourn until Friday, 14 February. We go from Friday the 13th to Valentine's Day. Look at that.

The Speaker: Valentine's Day.

Hon. E. David Burt: I think that someone is on their feet.

The Speaker: Minister of Education. Oh . . . Members, the Member from constituency 36 has risen. And I believe this would be her maiden—

[Desk thumping and cheers]

The Speaker: Members, this would be her maiden speech, so she has a clear 20 minutes [without] interruption.

Member, appreciate that because you may not ever get another uninterrupted one. But you have your uninterrupted speech at this time.

[No audio]

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: [Microphone off.]
. . . serve as their representative.

The Speaker: Yes. You're good.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: I will start again.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Honourable Speaker, distinguished colleagues and the people of Bermuda. It is with deep humility, gratitude and a sense of responsibility that I stand before you today having been elected by the people of constituency 36 to serve as their representative in this Honourable House.

To each individual who cast a vote in my favour and the myriads of others who have warmly welcomed me into your homes and your hearts, as you share both your concerns and your suggestions: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

To my colleagues who previously served in this constituency: your support, wisdom and continued guidance have helped to move us forward as a cohesive team in the west, addressing concerns and creating a stronger, fairer Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, this moment carries special meaning for me as I transition from my previous role in the Senate to this new chapter in my journey in public service. I am honoured to have the opportunity to continue serving the people of Bermuda in a new capacity and to represent the voices of the residents of constituency 36 in a time of great anticipation.

As we close out the year 2024 and move rapidly toward the year 2025, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment. One that holds the promise of renewal, change and progress. It is in this season of advent, a time marked by reflection, preparation and anticipation that I speak to this House today. The beams of hope, peace, joy and love guide my words and shape my vision for Bermuda's future.

Mr. Speaker, hope is the first theme of advent. And it is a fitting place to begin. As we look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of the future, we must do so with hope in our hearts. Hope is what fuels our belief that no matter the difficulties we face, we can create a better tomorrow in this House and in the work we do as lawmakers. It is hope that should drive our decisions, policies, and our actions.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda, like many nations has faced difficult times, economic challenges, social issues and political divisions. But the strength of our people lies in our capacity to hope, to believe that we can overcome adversity and emerge stronger. Hope, as defined by "Dr. Google" is not wishful thinking, or pipe dreaming but instead it is desire that is accompanied by expectation of or belief in fulfilment.

As we move toward 2025, I urge us all to focus on the hope that we can experience as a people of Bermuda. Hope for continued sustainable economic

growth. Hope for a second-to-none education system. Hope for quality health care for all. Hope for adequate housing. Hope for the reduction of violence. And hope for a more inclusive society. Let us be individuals who inspire hope not only with our words but with our actions. Let us work together to create the kind of Bermuda where every person from every walk of life can thrive.

Mr. Speaker, the second theme of advent is peace. Peace is not just the absence of conflict. It is the presence of justice, fairness and reconciliation. It is a peace that is built on understanding, dialogue and mutual respect. As we prepare for 2025, it is essential that we approach our challenges with a spirit of peace. Oft times we misinterpret peace as the absence of conflict. But in actual fact, the Scriptures compel us to be peacemakers as opposed to just peacekeepers. I encourage our electorate to ask the hard questions. To identify areas where there are still changes to be made and to courageously step forward to be a part of finding solutions to the problems that confront us.

At the 2024 Labour Day celebration I heard Ms. Toni Robinson, who was representing the Bermuda Entertainment Union state: *A need unspoken is a need unmet.* As we pursue peace, we must focus on problem-solving and continued diligence in righting the wrongs that have plagued us for decades and in some instances centuries.

Mr. Speaker, in this Honourable House let us commit ourselves to the pursuit of peace. Not just in the absence of disagreement but in the way we engage with one another, in the tone we set, and in the policies we create. Peace is found when we listen to each other, when we find common ground, and when we prioritise the well-being of all Bermudians. As we move forward, let us be leaders who work to foster peace in our communities and in our debates, recognising that a peaceful Bermuda is a prosperous Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, the third theme of advent is joy. Joy is a gift that comes when we experience the fullness of life and the strength of our communities. In times of challenge, joy may seem fleeting. But I believe that joy is found in the little victories, in the shared moments and in the progress we make together.

Mr. Speaker, as I observe the hard work of our colleagues and the diligence with which our leadership and government team work together to find solutions, give relief, and are genuinely committed to easing the burden for all Bermudians, I see great cause for joy. When I look at the vast majority of our young people who are brimming with talent, making right choices, and working to create successful futures, I see cause for joy. Joy does not ignore the fact that we are still facing challenges. But it focuses on the very strong reality that we are still a close-knit community and together we can work in earnest with

the help of God to bring about the changes that are necessary to turn some things around.

Mr. Speaker, as we move toward 2025, we should be filled with joy. Not in the sense of a fleeting moment of happiness, but in the deeper more enjoying joy that comes from knowing we are part of something bigger than ourselves. I recently spoke with a worker in one of our government departments. She said to me, *Rev, we are really busy at work. Ah! Lots of problems. But we are finding solutions, and it is exciting. It feels great to be a part of creating a better future for our people.*

Mr. Speaker, when we work for the common good, when we lift each other up, when we invest in our Island's future, we experience the joy that comes from seeing the positive change we can create together. I look forward to the joy of working with my colleagues across this House to build a Bermuda where every Bermudian has the opportunity to succeed, to grow, and to be a part of a vibrant, flourishing society.

Mr. Speaker, the final theme of advent is love. Love is the guiding principle that must be at the core of everything we do both in this House and in our communities. It is love for our fellow Bermudians, for our children, for our seniors, for our guest workers and our visitors, and for the left out and the least in society. It is love that compels us to serve with integrity, to act with compassion, and to work for justice.

As we approach 2025, let us remember that we are all servants of the people of Bermuda. Our duty is to love our Island and the people of Bermuda enough to put their needs first, to engage in honest dialogue and to create policies that uplift those who are most in need. Love is what binds us together. And it is through love that we will heal divisions, foster understanding and build a stronger, fairer Bermuda.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve once again. This time in a new role as a Member of Parliament. I look forward to the journey ahead with great anticipation and intend to embrace it in the spirit of advent.

Mr. Speaker, as we move toward 2025, and eventually the next general election, I encourage us all to approach the future with a spirit of unity and purpose, working together to create a future that reflects the very best of us. I wish everyone a Christmas season filled with hope, peace, joy and love. And a new year that exceeds our expectations. May the values of advent guide us in all that we do. And may we all be committed to bring out the best in Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Does any other Member . . . Minister of Education. Would you like your 20 minutes?

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

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

Mr. Speaker, as we approach this holiday season, I do wish to follow a similar theme, or the same theme, as MP Dill. I wish all of my fellow Bermudians the four themes of advent: hope, peace, time well-spent with loved ones, and joy.

Mr. Speaker, this is a season for reflection and gratitude. A chance to appreciate the blessings that we have, the people who enrich our lives and the moments we often overlook. Life is precious. Each day we are given is an opportunity to make it meaningful. Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Education, I want to extend my deepest thanks to our teachers, to our students, and to our parents for their dedication, their resilience and their unwavering commitment. They are the heartbeat of our community, and their contributions are what keeps us moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, to my fellow parliamentarians, while we may debate and even disagree within the walls of this House of Assembly, I know that every one of us is striving to do what is best for our beloved Island home.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: We are united in our shared desire to serve Bermuda and its people. And for that, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful.

Mr. Speaker, it is my sincerest desire and with all my prayers, for everyone to be safe during this season of celebration. Please use this time to rest, recharge and hold close to you the ones that you love. Trust, and believe me when I say, that I sincerely look forward to seeing each and every one of you when we return to this Honourable House ready to continue our important work.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I wish you and my fellow parliamentarians and fellow Bermudians a blessed holiday season and a prosperous new year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Any other Member?

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

The Speaker: MP Richardson, you have your 20 minutes.

THE IGNORANCE OF ADDICTION

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Good evening, Mr. Speaker. To my colleagues and those in the listening audience, as always.

Mr. Speaker, if I had to choose a theme it would be “The Ignorance of Addiction.” Mr. Speaker, ignorance is typically used in a negative connotation but as you know it only relates to a lack of knowledge. And, Mr. Speaker, my lack of knowledge about addiction as of last week Sunday led me to plead ignorance.

But, Mr. Speaker, you may be aware that in a different life I do a different thing, which is I host a radio programme. And I had the honour to interview Mr. Trevor Lindsay. He is well-known, Mr. Speaker, for the successful TNN. Some love him; some hate him. But he is who he is. But, Mr. Speaker, what it did also was remind me and the rest of the listening audience that his success came at a price. Mr. Speaker, in his own words he endured a 36-year journey from addiction to recovery. And he recently, Mr. Speaker, celebrated 14 years clean.

Mr. Speaker, he was adamant that such a position should not be heralded as a badge of honour since he knows first-hand how one decision can put him back in that condition. But, Mr. Speaker, my comments are not about Mr. Lindsay, but rather about how we as a community can assist persons who are addicted.

Mr. Speaker, the first message is in fact about prevention. And that is the message to our parents. To be mindful of the fact that what we do will have an impact on our children. So therefore be mindful of what we do and not think that what we do does not matter.

Mr. Speaker, the second point is about self-perception [which] has a significant impact on what we will and will not allow ourselves to do. Mr. Speaker, he told us also that a sense of rejection is very, very powerful in a negative direction. And then he went on to have this discussion in terms of it is actually not in life “what” we are, but “who” we are. And that that distinction will bring us to a better place of understanding what is and what is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. Because if we think that it is a “what,” it means that we believe that we are to be possessed by others. If we think of it as a “who,” we then realise that we are meant to do positive things.

What was in addition to all of these things, very surprising, Mr. Speaker, was that he made a comment that, yes, there is a debate right now in terms of whether marijuana is a gateway drug. And I guess the argument is that not everybody who smokes marijuana will become addicted to other drugs, but the reality is that everybody who is addicted would have dabbled in marijuana at some point in time. And what he talked about, which is very important to me, is that he had access to marijuana at a very young age, before age 10. And I said to him, *Well, that may have been back then but what about now?* And he took the time, Mr. Speaker, to explain the fact that *back in the day*, as we call it, there was probably one or two locations in Bermuda where you

could get drugs freely, marijuana especially. But that now there are many, many pockets in the Island whereby young people are able to access these drugs.

Because of course, Mr. Speaker, the concern was, *How does a 10-year-old person get to the point whereby they are able to buy the drugs?* But he explained that it is not about a young person buying the drugs, it is that they are given to them for free. Such that later on they will have the need, the desire and become a customer. So as in the normal terminology, I guess, we call it a loss leader. So, I will give drugs out free for the first, maybe two or three or four years, knowing that you will come back to me later on. And so he went through some detail about that, Mr. Speaker.

And the point there is that we need to make sure that the current easily available drugs have to be eradicated very, very aggressively because if we do not do that, Mr. Speaker, the reality is just as now we are lamenting the lack of early action around gangs, that we will cause Bermuda to be lost in a significant way based upon our young people.

And then, from experience, he talked about the fact that it is true that when you first use these drugs you will get the desired impact of an altered state of mind. And guess what? In the initial stages it is manageable. But the challenge is, it creeps up on you. And you do not know at what point you will become addicted. And at that point in time, you spiral out of control because that is what you desire to do every day and all day, is to make sure that you are able to maintain this sense of high (which is really a low) but as your body develops a tolerance for it, you need it more and more and more. And therefore we have challenges.

He also talked about the fact that, Mr. Speaker, as you know, your childhood or your upbringing has a major impact on your life. In some cases . . . and he expanded on the fact that even physical abuse that in some cases if you observe it as a young person, you will then repeat that as you get older. In other cases, of course, you will make sure that you will never do that again. And the same applies to drugs. That we have to be careful that we do not, even as parents . . . yes, you may decide that, yes, you will do what you want to do, but do not do it in front of your children because once they start, we do not know the impact, Mr. Speaker.

And then more importantly, because for me it is, *Okay, fine, Trevor, what do we do? What do we do? What do we do?* He gave a few simple examples, Mr. Speaker. One is to understand that addiction is a disease. The importance of that, Mr. Speaker, is that it changes how we will respond to those persons who we know or believe to be addicted. We would not say, *Oh, why are you doing such a thing?* We would not have all the negative commentary. We would understand that it is just as he used the reference, as hav-

ing cancer, or other physical ailments. It is a disease for which you are not in control.

Mr. Speaker, he also explained the fact that if you think that people want to be addicted, in my words, *You are crazy*. Nobody wants to have a loss of self, a loss of family, a loss of money, a loss of relationships, a loss of husband or wife, a loss of children, and of course, a loss of social interaction.

One of his scary comments was that he sometimes would walk with a knife and a machete but quoting Scripture. And the strange part of that was—not a strange part. The positive part about that was that he gave full commendation to his grandmother who in his earlier days made sure that he went to, in this case, church where he learned right from wrong. He knew what was going on was bad. Notwithstanding what he was doing at that time.

But he talked about the fact that as we know what you are taught as a young person does stay with you. So as crazy as it sounded, Mr. Speaker, he would go and have a knife and a machete, whatever reason to defend himself, whatever he was going to do, but be quoting Scriptures. And that is what brought him back to reality at a later point in time. So he gave commendation to his grandmother, Mr. Speaker.

So, the second one, Mr. Speaker, which is harder than the first, I guess, is that if our loved ones are addicted, in his words, and it goes back to what Reverend Dill said earlier, *Please never give up hope. Please never give up hope but do not be an enabler*. And so, when those persons come along, as we see them sometimes on the street and they say, *Give me some money, give me some money, give me some money*. He said, *No, no, no, no, no. Don't be an enabler*. But do make sure that they have their basic needs met. And so, yes, do provide food, but not money. It seemed to be an obvious comment but that is what he was talking about, and it is good for all of us here and those who are listening to know that that is something that we can do.

During the programme, Mr. Speaker, someone called in and talked about the methadone programme of which I have no familiarity, so I do again plead ignorance. And their comment was you should cancel the methadone programme. And Trevor said, *No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no. No, no. No, no. If we are not supportive of the methadone programme and it gets cancelled for whatever reason, (not that there is any intention to do so) we would cause havoc in Bermuda*. Because all those who are part of the methadone programme would have no access to being able to calm their needs and they will be in the community causing havoc (as he says) whether it be petty crimes or otherwise to make sure that the money that they need to get the drugs they need to satisfy their physical need. So that one was a big one for me, Mr. Speaker.

And as I get down to my close, a real, real impact for each and every one of us—again, using his words—is we must collectively, we must collectively release former and recovering addicts from their past. We must release former addicts from their past. I do not know if it was his quote, but he used those words, Mr. Speaker. And used an example of [that] we need to look in the mirror and stop looking through the glass. Look in the mirror and see self. What can we do? What can we do to assist in these various areas?

Don't look through the glass and see others and emphasise their faults. That is putting them back, potentially. And what was really striking to me was that we have the ability as an entire society to cause them to revert, to relapse, and to go back into addiction if all they hear from us is: *You used to. You used to. You used to; or, I remember when*. So it is a very important message for us in the community to know that we can have a significant impact on person's going backward if we simply speak to what is and what shall be as opposed to their past.

And also, what tied to that, Mr. Speaker, which is really, really revealing to me is that, guess what? It is even more difficult for females to remain recovered than males. And his explanation was because the women, in many cases or in some cases, allow themselves to be negatively impacted by many people. And those many people will tend to recite what they know of them in the past. And so again, we need to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we release them from their past.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as I draw to a close, I will end where I started. Ignorance, Mr. Speaker, is a lack of knowledge. And therefore, the opposite, a lack of ignorance is knowledge. And so I did not come here today to laud Mr. Trevor Lindsay. What I came to do, hopefully, is to deliver a small but powerful message to the listening audience and to us in this Chamber, to know that we have a very, very, very important role to play in terms of those whom we think, or we know are recovered or recovering. Let us make sure that we assist them in what can be in a very small way, but a very powerful way which is: let's not remind them of their past.

Mr. Lindsay also spoke very powerfully about his appreciation for the various societal agencies. He included . . . and MP Caines talked about it last week, about the Drug Court. About how he gave significant credit to Worship . . . or Magistrate Wolffe. He also gave significant credit to (not in a legal sense but in a general sense) former Manager at ZBM, Rick Richardson, who took him under his wing. And part of the smile of it all was that he fired him seven times, but obviously rehired him seven times. And that is because Mr. Lindsay is recognised as one of Bermuda's best journalists. And I said, yes, we complain about what he does when he is on our side, when he is not on our side, but he is one of the best in terms of when it comes to using videography, when it comes to (in

his words) getting the story. He will do anything to get the story.

He did also reflect on the fact that back in the day he was so good that he would be able to take photographs and then sell them to the daily and others because they knew how good those pictures were. And they helped to make the story. As we know, a picture tells a thousand words.

And so, I do want to conclude really by saying that . . . oh, sorry. He also spoke tremendously about the professionals in the addiction services throughout Bermuda. And how they were able to help him to understand how some of the activities and observances and experiences in his past had caused him to act and react today. And I was surprised, but they do that in a group session. But he explained that that is a good thing because it helps others who are in the group. If I am in the group, for example, and I am relatively quiet or shy or not prepared to share, that others in the group who are sharing give me the encouragement to share. And it is the sharing that gets us out of the addiction. And so that for me was also very, very powerful.

And so now I will really conclude by saying to those in the Chamber, and those in the listening audience, I trust that I have said at least one thing, as reflected by Mr. Lindsay, that will cause us to act differently and have a positive impact on those in the community. And to those who are listening or can hear my voice, we are here for you no matter your circumstances, no matter what you are doing right now, we, Bermuda, are here for you and there is hope.

And so, Mr. Speaker, Merry Christmas to you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Anthony Richardson: Merry Christmas to my colleagues. Merry Christmas to all of the residents in Bermuda who are in the listening audience. I am thankful for the ability to be here in this House and I too, as the Minister Robain said, look forward to returning on February 14 to rejoin the conversation, the debate and do the important work that is here in this Chamber to make Bermuda a better and fairer place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.
Minister Burch.

THE POWER OF SAYING “YES”: ENCOURAGE YOUNG BERMUDIANS TO PURSUE THEIR IDEAS AND PASSIONS

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I am going to make the same assumption I made in July when we adjourned—

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: —that this may very well be my last occasion to speak in this House. I was first sworn in as a Senator in November 1998. I only say that so that people will recognise that that is a long time. And those who are inclined to tell me that I should do another term might cease and desist because that is not going to happen.

This ride has been an incredibly long and fruitful one most of the time. And I don't even wish to look at some of the highs or the lows. That's for somebody else to decide. What I would like to spend this time doing is talking about how easy it is to say *Yes*. I have a view that Bermuda very much is the *Country of No*. And I know that people generally do not like change, especially when they do not know what the future holds. And really, do you? But we say no to everything. Everything new. Everything from young people. Everything from old people. If it is different or new, we generally say no.

And I have had a recent experience where I had the opportunity to also say no or to say yes. About three months ago I met a bright, articulate, committed, educated, forward-thinking 26-year-old Bermudian man who wanted to bring motocross back to Coney Island. He had gone through the regular process of applying to the Parks Commission and they heard it. I didn't read those minutes, so I was unaware that this activity was even being planned. In fact, it goes back further than that, Mr. Speaker. He had applied in 2019, and the Parks Commission actually said yes to the same period that he is getting now. But of course, COVID-19 came and it didn't happen.

In any case, he went before the Parks Commission and they considered it, and they came up with five queries that suggested . . . or that they decided that they were going to recommend no. And they did. They gave him a letter that said . . . they asked him five questions. I can't remember them all. But I know the first one was: You have not covered parking. And so I eventually . . . one of his supporters works for Public Works. And he saw me, and he said to me, *You need to know about this*. And I am pokey. I'm like the average Bermudian. I poke in everything. And so, I got the letter and I read the letter and I thought, *Okay. This has not been decided so it hasn't come to me*.

So I asked the chairman, I said, *Have you met with this young man to discuss . . . ?*

He said, *No*.

So, I said, *Well, I will meet with him*. And I took the letter, and I reached out and he came to meet me and he brought two of his supporters with him. One was the young man who works for us in Public

Works. And the other was a young man who worked for us in Parks. And I had never seen this young man before in my life. And so, the first question I asked him was, *What are you going to do about parking?*

And he pulled out a letter and he shoved it across the table and the letter was from Bailey's Bay Club, giving him permission to use their field for parking. And I thought right away, *This is my type of young person.* They did not take no as a final answer.

And then the next question was . . . There are people who work on Coney Island. And there is a DENR outlet on Coney Island and so they were concerned about them being able to get access to their work on a Sunday. And he said that he had written that there was no problem with them coming and going as they pleased.

One of the other queries was, Why are you wanting to go to Coney Island as opposed to Southside where there already is a track? So, I asked him that question and he right away said, *Nobody is going to come to Bermuda to ride on Southside because it is a manmade track. Coney Island is a natural track.*

So I think what you get out of this, Mr. Speaker, is that he has thought this through. He has taken the decision somewhat of the commission and gone about addressing it. So, I was impressed. He answered every question adequately, in my opinion. I am a visual person, though.

The other question was: What changes are you going to make to Coney Island in terms of tracks and whatever else? And he said, *I am not going to make any. I am going to use the current walking trails. I am going to put in some jumps with soil and mulch. But I will be able to remove them and put it back the way that it was.* So I was impressed.

But I am a visual person, so I said to him . . . after the meeting (like on a Friday we were in the House or something), I said, *Can you meet me at Coney Island at 4:30?*

He said, Yes.

I wanted to see what they were doing before I made a decision. I went and I said, *I want to walk the track.*

He said, *The whole track?*

I said, *Yes, the whole track. And I want you to point out to me what it is that you are going to do and where you are going to do it.* And we did that. And they confirmed what he had said he was going to do.

So, the usual cast of characters who are environmentalists, who in my opinion serve a valuable purpose, but also in my opinion say no to everything—everything new. And I should point out, Mr. Speaker, that I get recommendations from the Parks Commission on a regular basis that never make the news, that never make any issue on a whole host of topics. And they recommend one thing and generally I agree with them. But there are occasions when if you are making a recommendation, I get to weigh out, or whoever the

Minister is, gets to weigh out the pros and cons and the wider benefit and looks to strike a balance in the community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I then decided that I would give him permission. But that is not the end of the story, Mr. Speaker. I really decided that I would give him permission because we were at the front end of this exercise. And I did not want a young Bermudian to feel as if he had an idea that he thought was good and at the first hurdle he was told no. He had several other places to go to get permission and to do things.

He had to fill out the application at Planning. He had to get insurance. He had to do various other things that are required from anybody doing this. But I wanted him to learn that, yes, *I can either meet all of these challenges and have an event; or, I will find out that some challenges that I cannot meet, or I do not want to meet, and it will not happen.* But he would not be able to say to all of his young people colleagues, *I had an idea, and I was told no at the starting gate.* And so I told him that . . . I told him exactly what I just said. *You have got other stops to make. We will help you. But I am saying yes.* And off he went.

And, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, I have been to Coney Island more in the last month and a half than I have my whole life. I never went to motocross. But I have seen them develop the process. I was there yesterday. And Sunday is going to be exciting. Oh, I left out something.

The Speaker: You left out the ride you had?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: What?

The Speaker: You left out the ride you took.

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The what?

The Speaker: The ride you had! You didn't tell us about your ride around the track yet.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Oh, I didn't . . . I walked.

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I walked.

[Inaudible interjections]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: No, during this exercise he had a meeting at Bay Club to meet with all the people who wanted to race and were interested and curious. I found out about it late, so I still went. So I got there late. The place was rammed. He was sitting at the front with a bunch of young people who supported him.

But also, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, his parents are actively present and supporting him and have done so. I neglected to mention he does this for a living. He races in the US. He has raced in DR. He has raced in Canada. All over the place. And I have a particular interest in meeting young Bermudians who are doing things for the first time. And I have never met anybody who does this for a living. So, that was the other reason why I wanted to engage and talk to him.

And he had a meeting at Bay Club where the age limits were from about 5 to about 75. And people asked . . . he presented on what will take place at the event. And people asked questions, and he answered them competently. The meeting ended and I hung around and talked to people. And the number of people who raced at Coney Island when it was open more than 20 years ago, were so excited. Some of them are bringing out a bike from the back of their garage or wherever to race on Sunday. Because one of the . . . I think the last race is Old Timer's Race, they are calling it. I said, *Come up with a slightly better name than Old Timer's*. But it is essentially for people who used to race on Coney Island track to be able to do that again.

Mr. Speaker, the other reason why I said yes is that this is more than about motocross. About two years ago I was invited to Southside by the same worker who has an interest in that. And I went. And I had not been there at all. And one of the things . . . the most important thing that impressed me about that activity at Southside . . . first of all, it was teeming with young people and adults. But the most impressive thing, Mr. Speaker, was that fathers were present and involved and engaged with the entire family. And it was . . . I mean it just stands out so significantly though on the track when the young people are racing, they are in the . . . I forget the term. What's the term?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Pits.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Pits.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The pit. That's it.

The Speaker: Okay.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: And they are just actively involved in the activity.

The other thing that is important about this, Mr. Speaker, is that it is the land of peace.

The Speaker: Hmm.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: No gang member acts up at motocross. And you see people who come from Somerset who are active in St. David's. And there is no threat. There is no criticism. And there might be friction. But when you are in an activity that involves your little people and their little people and everybody is helping them, you break down some barriers that other things would not be able to.

And so I was so impressed. I am so impressed by the people and the enthusiasm that has been generated in this country for Sunday, that I think we are going to reap benefits that go far beyond motocross. Far beyond motocross, Mr. Speaker. Shall I call the byes name?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Jyire Mitchell.

An Hon. Member: Jyire.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Jyire Mitchell.

Mr. Speaker, and this is how small the world is. I had a clinic at Pervis School since 2012. Every first Saturday of the month. And there is a senior citizen who comes to that clinic every month. He is not a constituent. But he comes. And I tell him, *I will talk to you as long as I don't have any of my constituents. But when they come, I must pause you*. And so the Saturday after the Friday that I went to Coney Island, he came to the clinic as usual. Late though. He came at five to twelve. And he said, *I know I come and I talk a lot when I come. Today I am coming just to say thank you*.

And I said, *Thank you for what?*

And he said, *Jyire is my grandson*.

[Inaudible interjections]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: And so when you help a young person, the circle is so wide of their relatives and everybody else, just from saying yes. He has not even been able to pull it off. And the event is not history. But the fact that he got encouragement has sent a clear message to them.

I go to the cleaners on Bermudiana Road. And there is a lady there who I know. I have been going there for decades. And she normally works in the back. But she was working out front this day. And she said to me . . . she served another customer and then she said to me, *I have to give you a hug*.

Now, you know I am not a hugger, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: So, I said, *Why?*

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: She said, *I am Jyire's grandmother.*

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: And I am like . . . okay. So all of this . . . I say all of this to say, Mr. Speaker, that that experience and saying yes is the best part of this job.

[Inaudible interjections]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: All 26 years of it.

[Desk thumping]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, we held a press conference yesterday at Coney Island because I wanted the media in Bermuda to see . . . and I know that if you say something a thousand times, at the thousandth time somebody is going to hear it for the first time. And I wanted him and them to see and hear him and also witness the transformation of Southside but also to recognise that this is more than about motocross. He has young Bermudians who do this for a living overseas as well, who are bringing bikes home for the weekend to race on Sunday.

And so, the circle of support that he has had numbers about 100, from every permutation you can imagine. And the track is ready. The riders are ready. The spectators are ready. I'm ready; I'm not going for the whole day.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I can't imagine.

And, Mr. Speaker, from my point of view, internally I will be as proud of his effort and his success as anybody who is a blood relative to him. He is a young member in our village, and I believe that all the adults in the village should be supportive of all the young people in the village.

And everybody in this country, *everybody in this country*, can do something to help a young person. Even if it is just by giving them encouragement to pursue their ideas and their passion and whatever it is that they wish to do. The results for the country will be just unbelievable, Mr. Speaker. Because you will be stepping from a position of saying no to everything to actually saying yes.

And so I am excited at the opportunity that is being presented to this country. And I encourage all Honourable Members to put in an appearance on Sunday and witness it for yourself. Let me just say this, Mr. Speaker, as a closing point. His mother is a pushy Bermudian, and she tried to give me free tick-

ets. And I said to her, *You are running a business. I can afford to buy my own tickets, and I will do so.*

And I had to do it by stealth because she was as determined as I was, and I guess she must be a Taurean and so I found out they were selling them online, so I was home free. I just went on and bought them. And so I have not seen her to let her know that whilst her offer was very much appreciated, [she] is running a business. I can afford to purchase my own tickets, and I did so. And I encourage everybody else to do the same.

[Timer chimes]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Minister Furbert, would you like your 20 minutes?

UNITED NATIONS INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I will be using all 20 minutes, but I do want to take the opportunity to wish Bermuda, being that this is the last sitting of the term but wish Bermuda a very Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays and Happy New Year, when that comes.

But I did not want to miss the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to speak to United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities. This day was celebrated last week, and I did not have the opportunity to address it in the House last week Friday. But on 3 December we had a proclamation, and we celebrated persons with disabilities with the acknowledgement of the United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities. And I want to right now acknowledge all of the organisations who came out to celebrate persons with disabilities, those including the Disability Advisory Council, Inspire Bermuda.

There was a guest speaker, of course, Sherrie-Lynn Lilley, who spoke that day. And the theme was "Amplifying the Leadership of Persons with Disabilities." That day I had on pins . . . WindReach is doing a promotion in regard . . . if you see little buttons, they are selling pins for their particular charity. And it is just small sayings, Mr. Speaker, for persons to remember inclusion and diversity. And those sayings [are]: *Inclusivity is a vibe. Normal is a setting on the dryer. Don't diss my ability. Accessibility should not be complicated. Break the stigma. Diversity—Let's talk about it.*

And I have to bring this to our community's minds and thoughts because later that evening I had the opportunity . . . and Minister Diallo [Rabain] also was there as well. We joined a group, a charity organisation, Beyond Inclusion, who . . . they provide activities for persons with disabilities and make sure they have access to places around Bermuda. Maybe a particular activity or restaurant. And they go out and they provide opportunities for persons with disabilities to be able to get out and experience different locations.

They also are providing respite services for parents in the communities who may need support. They might need to go out shopping or they need a bit of respite, a day off. And they provide a particular service.

But this particular evening, Mr. Speaker, they did a screening of the Disney movie [*Out of My Mind*] And [*Out of My Mind*] shared a story of a young lady in a wheelchair. She had the condition of cerebral palsy. And she wanted to be included in the regular classroom. And so it shared her journey and her story of how just . . . she wanted to be a part of a . . . It was a competition. Kind of like . . . what do you call them? Like questionnaire, like a *Jeopardy* sort of competition where the classmates have to answer questions, and they get to win prizes for their school.

And in the movie the young lady, she had to take a test to prove amongst her peers, who was the brightest and who was the smartest and who could pull through and represent their school in this sort of quiz competition. And she participated in the questionnaire, but she was not recognised by her teacher. And her teacher felt as though, because of her disability and her being in a wheelchair that she would not represent the school to its full ability.

The story went on and showed how, you know, because of her disability she was discriminated against. Because the teacher did not want to include her as part of the team even though in the end they found out that she got the highest score . . . she got a perfect score in the quiz to be able to enter to be part of the team who would represent the school in this global quiz competition.

And so I just want to remind our community that we should not underestimate persons with disabilities because of how they look. And I think we do that often. Sometimes it is not just providing a ramp that creates accessibility. A lot of it comes from how we think and how we accept and our attitudes toward persons with disabilities.

And I want to give another example because last night I had the opportunity to go to dinner with a group and the lady who I was sitting next to had only use of one of her arms. And so she could not use a knife and a fork, like anyone would if they had two hands. So, she used the one arm and she used the fork in the one hand and she used her thumb as the scooper for the knife. Right?

And it was interesting because it was *Wow*. Well, for me in my head, I am like, *Wow. Look at this adaptation. Look at this modification so that she could be independent . . . to be able to not use utensils but use her thumb as a tool so that she could pick up her food and bring it to her mouth.*

But many people may have looked at that as being gross. Or, *Why is somebody eating with their fingers?* Not understanding what people . . . the adaptation or the modification that people have to use or go through to be able to be independent. And so really it is just a change of how we think. It is a change of our attitudes and how we accept people's functionality. And to just look at things a little bit differently. Because the ultimate aim is accessibility and how we encourage and how we support people to be as independent as they possibly can.

It also brought me great pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to see the Bermuda Police Service's sports cards that are currently out. And they actually launched on the UN International Day of Persons with Disabilities. They launched Special Olympians to be part of the fleet . . . part of the group of sports cards that they are giving out. And I thought, *Wow! That's a true, true reflection.* A true reflection of what we want our community to be in making sure that we include persons with disabilities, you know, in everything that we do.

And if you have not had the opportunity to get your hands on those sports cards, please do. They have 18 out right now. They have a gold series that is sponsored by Hamilton Princess and they are absolutely wonderful and beautiful. And I am sure the children would love to get their hands on them.

But I want to thank the Bermuda Police Service for making sure that they included the Special Olympians to be part of the card selection that they are providing for us in the community. And that will go down in history. And once you start something like that they will have to continue. And so it was great to see that inclusion there with the sports cards.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: IMPACT ON IN OUR ISLAND

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I also want to take the time because last week, sorry this week, we closed out also recognising the United Nation's [Ending] Violence Against Women and Girls. I think I heard my colleague speak about it a bit earlier. But yesterday, Senator Lindsay [Simmons] had arranged for some Ministers and other significant persons in the community to go to a particular high school to speak to our young people about domestic violence. I want to thank Senator Lindsay for that opportunity because we learnt much. I will not name the particular high school because we tend to label things and not always for the best.

But it was interesting because we had . . . there was a video that was shown to the students in

regard to examples of what domestic violence would look like. And there was a particular scene where the . . . one of the partners had pulled the hair of the other partner and then they slapped them, they slapped the person across their face. And the students laughed.

I had to process that because it was like, *You know what? This was not a laughing matter.* And I said, *How are we viewing videos? How are we not interpreting the information like that? Is it that we are so desensitised to violent situations because of the frequency in which we may be viewing it on TV or social media or . . . other sort of images that we see?* Because I could not understand why someone's hair being pulled and someone being slapped in the face was funny. And if we are viewing incidents of violence that way, Mr. Speaker, then we have a long way . . . we have some work to do. We have a lot of work to do.

I want to . . . so I do not want to look at this experience as being a bad one because I think by the end there were some relevant points that were made. It was an opportunity for awareness. It was an opportunity for young people to learn about what domestic violence looks like, what are the root causes, how they can change their behaviours. And by the end of that presentation, I said to myself, *You know what? We cannot run away from this problem. We have to look it right in the face and we have to go back year after year after year and remind our young people that this is not a laughing matter.*

And this is . . . it then brought thoughts to my head of why people do not report and why people do not feel as though they are supported because the matters are not being taken seriously enough. And people are not understanding the impacts after a violent episode or experience occurs. And so, you know, I am committed whenever we want to go into the schools again and speak with our young people about domestic violence. It is a must.

It is a must that we repeat and repeat the opportunity to talk to our young people about the impact of domestic violence in our Island. Particularly as we spoke about the National Violence Reduction Strategy last week. Because we need people to get that these incidents, whether you are in them or not, when you are viewing them on social media that you play a part. We all play a part in making sure that we are serious about them and that they, Mr. Speaker, are no laughing matter.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

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

Mr. Speaker, as we approach this holiday season, with regard to Christmas, I just want to take this opportunity to express from my family to especially my constituents and people throughout this country a blessed Merry Christmas. And I want folks to take the opportunity in the first instance, Mr. Speaker, to appreciate that whilst there are those of us who can celebrate Christmas, there are those of us who will participate in doing what we can to help others, there are many that will be in Bermuda and around the world some that we may even know who, Mr. Speaker, will be suffering in silence. Some will be coping with mental health issues. Some will be depressed and the like. And I want us to be mindful that being cognisant that not everybody is enjoying this period, this holiday period. It is a very devastating period to many, especially those who are suffering, Mr. Speaker.

RELATIONSHIPS ARE THE CORNERSTONE OF TOURISM

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Mr. Speaker, I was encouraged this morning with the Ministerial Statement by the Minister of Transport, especially as he shared with us about the air service that we are getting. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate BermudaAir on its first anniversary. I think for many years, Mr. Speaker, we have talked about Bermuda having another airline, having its own airline of sorts, and we have seen other countries that have airlines that bear their name. It was always viewed with negative connotations.

We always . . . and just picking up on the great speech that Colonel Burch gave, you know, persons always gave us the reason why it could not happen. But today on this one-year anniversary period for BermudaAir, I am amazed, Mr. Speaker, that today we have Boston reconnected for Bermuda when during COVID-19 and around that time for the first time in my lifetime you could not get to Boston on a daily basis. We have connected with Westchester, Mr. Speaker. We have connected with Baltimore, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Toronto, Halifax, Mr. Speaker. And then what really got me extra excited is to learn from the Minister today that Montreal, Quebec; Hamilton, Ontario and Norfolk, Virginia are considered routes that we can look forward to.

And I am excited because, Mr. Speaker, persons tell me, *You talk about golf a lot.* That is my trade. If it was a dentist, I would use dental analogies. If I was an accountant, I would use accountant [analogies]. If I was a lawyer, I would probably gravitate towards some legal connotations. I am a professional golfer by trade who grew up working for a great organisation in Tucker's Town owned by a company called Bermuda Properties.

And I am going to tell you that back in the 1960s, Mr. Speaker, long before I got in the hospitality industry for the 50-odd years I have been, Montreal was a one-stop shop to Bermuda. Places like Lachute [Golf] Club, Royal Quebec [Golf] Club, Royal Montreal [Golf] Club were household names with the people who are members of those clubs in Bermuda on a regular basis. And Bermudians used to go, a lot of them used to go to school up in that area as well. Some celebrated persons who have been doctors (and other professions) have studied at places like McGill [University] and the like. But it made a lot of sense to look at that market.

Mr. Speaker, when I start hearing Norfolk, Virginia that Mid-Atlantic area for tourism in Bermuda is very, very well-established and it is just a short hop, but up and down that Mid-Atlantic coast there are a lot of opportunities for Bermuda to find visitors that would enjoy a Bermuda experience, Mr. Speaker. And I am excited about that.

I am excited and I will continue to advocate that we need to hitch our wagon to BermudAir in our marketing to make their job even easier. But because we are all . . . they are selling Bermuda like no one else. Well, they are selling it like my friends—and I declare my interest. In another life, about 20-odd years ago I was a marketing manager for Gosling's Limited, who formed an export company who manufacture a Bermuda brand and take it globally. And we need to be partnering with persons like that who are in these markets.

When I was a marketing manager one of the things that I used to do whenever I walked into a grocery store, no matter if it was in Orlando or no matter if it was in Florida, the first thing I went when I went in the liquor, I looked at placements. I looked to see if Jacob's Creek was there. I looked to see if Nobile was there. And of course, I looked to see if Gosling's was there—and in many places they are, in many places around the world. We can piggyback on that, just like we can piggyback on the fact that there are many Bermudians who are around the world.

And I am hoping that we can leverage that even more to our benefit. Why, Mr. Speaker? Because relationships are the cornerstone of tourism. I learnt that 50 years ago from Walter King and then going down to Belmont with all the good folks down there like DeVoye Augustus and persons like Earl Bailey and Cleve Dillas and the like. You know, you had to make relationships. You had to go get your Boston Globe down in when it came in on the flight to be able to know what information is happening so that you can convey it to your visitors. We were trained in the hospitality industry.

So, I am proud to know that the [AnchorBDA] programme by the BTA (Bermuda Tourism Authority) is out there being put forward by young Bermudians in the BTA. Ms. Davida O'Brien, very excited about that programme, educating Bermudians in the hospitality

industry. And they have programmes that teach Bermudians about historical facts that help them in their ability to serve this country.

Mr. Speaker, knowing that in two years we will have the Southampton Princess up again with that \$500-plus million redevelopment that is taking place. Money is going to come and follow that good money that is taking root and providing some great opportunities. So, I am looking forward with hope, Mr. Speaker, with hope that we will see in placed maybe down in Sonesta, certainly hoping that we see up at Elbow Beach and maybe some other places, greater beds coming in Bermuda. But it is not lost on me, Mr. Speaker, that when we do get those beds in Southampton at the Princess, we will have the same problem multiplied. And that is unsold inventory between 1 November and 30 April. And I am making this clarion call once again here in this Honourable House and I am doing it wherever I can in the places that I sit to be able to sing the gospel that this is where we need to put our eggs.

On congrats and obits today, I called a name, Mr. Bob Corrao. I have written to him. I have thanked him. I have sent a news article out because . . . to be able to cause 200 people to come to Bermuda again when we were down to zero because of COVID-19. It does not happen in one fell swoop. Even a person with great means cannot make it happen with a snap of the finger. But it takes commitment. It takes belief. And it takes work. And it takes time.

And I have been in the space as well with less financial personal resources and put my money where my mouth is, like he did. And I am proud this week . . . when those folks were in Bermuda playing Tucker's Point, playing Port Royal and playing in Belmont [Hill's] simultaneously, you know. Seventy-two people a time at those particular places taking taxis, going out to dinner. And they represented some of the finest country clubs in the world—well, certainly in the eastern United States, Canada and in Europe.

I am telling you, you know, their disposable income will tick the major box of the demographic that we need. Now, when I talk about what is required during this time period, I am talking about persons changing their mind-set. Look at Bermuda as 25 weeks in the winter that is undersold. Look at that opportunity. And look at what 500 people in Bermuda for a week would do. That is 500 people in Bermuda times 7 days, times 25 weeks spending about \$2,000 a day. Now, that is about \$175 million right there. I have done my sums. Of economic—but more importantly the relationships that are getting formed in these regions, it is a multiplier effect like none other.

I am not inventing this. I was taught this 50 years ago. It happened in Bermuda a hundred years ago. When I was convalescing this year, Mr. Speaker, I was doing a lot of research. You think President Taft and Woodrow Wilson and Samuel Clemmons running around Bermuda with Charles Blair Macdonald in

1895 when Bermuda didn't have any but four military golf courses on bases . . . on military outposts. At the time when the USGA was just getting founded. The shakers and movers of the USGA were here in Bermuda—and went to Newport. And then they went and built Mid Ocean and between 1922 and 1931, Bermuda built seven golf courses. People say, *Why are you talking about golf?* Because the economy of this country was built around golf. And why? Because people with money that can afford a Bermuda experience, a discerning Bermuda experience, right, they enjoy golf. They enjoy sailing. They enjoy tennis. And guess who the next emerging people are? Pickleball.

And just like we were in on tennis and golf at the very beginning a hundred years ago . . . no, 125 years ago. We were there. We were in on it. We are in on pickleball right now. And if anyone were to look at the statistics of the number of people moving toward it, gravitating toward it, the opportunity to be able—and why would it be so good for this country to do something like that is that when you are in tourism, you have to be flexible, not rigid.

You have to be able to adapt in the wintertime to maybe it is going to rain some days. Maybe it is going to be windy some days. But pickleball and tennis, you can have indoor courts, just like squash, you know. I advocated for the young guy [Nick] Kyme when he was in a world rank player. They didn't want him playing in Bermuda. I took on the squash association (international) and I was proud that he invited me over at the . . . Bermuda High School for Girls, when he played in top class squash. Those are the types of events that can happen indoors. There are many others!

And it is not just limited to sports. It goes with the arts as well, you know. We have the music festival that brought people here. You know, they play golf too. They might play bridge. They might like arts or whatever, diversified. But we have got to get people that like what we have. We don't have to build it. We might have to improve on summer services. We might have to make sure that Coral Beach Club has an enclosure so if it is raining, they . . . or Horizons, you can do some pickleball inside if the weather is a little iffy and have some indoor facilities where you can train people as well. Beach volleyball and the like.

Mr. Speaker, I am here to tell you that the glass is half full when we start recognising that the country that started in tourism as a winter destination has the same appeal and love out there amongst people. But we have got to go to them. You cannot put ads in *The Telegraph* and hope that the people see them. You have got to go to their country clubs. You have got to touch their flesh. You have got to make the relationships. You have got to lend leverage to relationships. And you have to make your friends before you need them.

That is why Mr. Bob Corrao was able to bring 200 people here with work and the belief that he could

do it. Right? Because he was able to know that what they would come and experience they would enjoy. Just like I do! Going around different places in France and Germany and in Canada and in the United States and in Jamaica and in Dominican Republic and in Cuba and in Puerto Rico and playing sports and doing stuff and hobnobbing. And even when we go to Parliamentary conferences, the cross-pollination. You show up in Tanzania and you see the people from Fiji that remembered you from 50 years ago, Mr. Speaker. That is where this country needs to go in regard to getting greater tourists in the wintertime.

In the wintertime between November—because the people, my friends in the UK that love sport, whether or not it is horse racing or rugby. Whether or not it is football or golf. I can tell you what, if it is raining, it does not stop them from teeing off. We are the only ones running for cover until the rain stops. They have the greatest waterproofs, they have the best waterproof shoes and they go out and tough it out. And when we can go around and experience the world and go in their neighbourhoods and convince them to come to Bermuda . . . 500 people a week for 25 weeks is not a lot of people. When you have got millions around the world to go to who enjoy what we have, Mr. Speaker.

I just want us as we come into this holiday season to once again reiterate that our attitude might save a life, Mr. Speaker. Us taking a caring approach, not just giving somebody something, but listening to them, Mr. Speaker, because this time of year is when people are under a lot of stress globally. And I just hope that in this country that we will have a safe and a family-oriented Christmas. I call it Christmas because I believe in Christ, and I make no apologies. I love Jesus.

Two years ago, it was singing a song *I Love Jesus* that helped me and my family. But I know that not everybody, not every family embraces Jesus. But most people in this country believe in a higher being. And the one common denominator, my cousin who gave her Maiden Speech said the greatest of them all is love. We all have the capacity to love. And we all want to be loved. Let us show love during this holiday season. And let us have a belief that this country has the capacity to overcome any adversity that it faces if it can appreciate the true meaning of love. And let us start with this Christmas season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

MP Simmons-Wade, would you like your 20 minutes?

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

MP'S POLITICAL JOURNEY ENDS, DOING WORK WITH SENIORS WILL CONTINUE

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Mr. Speaker, and members of the listening public, first of all I would like to take this opportunity to wish everybody a happy, healthy and safe holiday with their families and friends. And following Colonel Burch, I will say I do not know whether this will be the last time that I will have this opportunity to speak in this Honourable Chambers.

First of all, I would like to express my appreciation to the Premier for approving me to the Senate in 2019. I joined an amazing Senate team who, as a matter of fact, the cabral [*sic*] all won their seats . . . cabal, sorry, all won their seats. Right?

Ten months later as I was just getting my feet wet, the Premier decided to call an election. And he asked me to run in Warwick North East. Well, what a tough act to follow after Curtis Dickinson. Rather an uphill battle, to say the least. The constituents entrusted me to come into their homes, to be their representative and to talk about their lives.

I will say, I did not go into this blindfolded because I was the wife of a politician. So, I actually knew what I was getting into. You try to walk to your car, everybody follows you. People call you at night. Your life is not your own. Many of my friends thought I was a bit crazy to go into politics at 64 when all of them were actually about to retire. But the country called, and the Premier asked me to serve, and serve I did.

This has been an amazing five years for me. I have served my constituents. I have impacted legislation and I have had an experience that has changed my life for the better. I have also had an opportunity to work with very dedicated and committed colleagues from both side of the House. I will say everybody has the goal to have Bermuda in a better place regardless of which side of the House we are on. They just use a different map to get there.

People wonder sometimes, I think, *What do politicians actually do?* Mind you, you are talking about pay increases, et cetera. Until you are there, and you realise the sacrifices that you make, and your family makes with every tea, every funeral, every activity that you have to go to, your life is not your own. I will say the greatest honour that I have had is to serve the people of Bermuda, to serve my family, to serve my friends.

My focus as you all know has been primarily on seniors. As a senior I actually have a vested interest and I will say as a part of this Government, I am proud to say so many things that have been done for our seniors. From increasing the pensions to FutureCare to day care allowances and what people don't talk about, because you know I am in the industry, the increases that they gave for long-term care, so the burdens were not on actual families. The financial assistance that was increased has made a significant

difference in the lives of our people. And most importantly, as you saw today, the National Seniors Strategy which is a blueprint for all government ministries in terms of how we are going to deal with this rapidly increasing population.

Mr. Speaker, not a day goes by that I get calls from seniors in this country—PLP, OBA, everybody, Independents—and it is because seniors are seniors regardless of what party they are affiliated with. They have challenges and many of them are not actually even aware of the services and the benefits that are available to them. So, my goal has been to ensure as an advocate for our seniors that I determine what is there for them and provide the assistance to make sure that they have access to all of the benefits in this country.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my family, to thank my friends and also my colleagues who have been very supportive to me during this amazing five-year journey. When I first came in, it was very interesting because, Mr. Speaker, you said, *Oh, Ms. Wade, I think you are the first wife of a sitting MP.* And I was like, *Oh, well, nobody else would do it except me.* But I certainly feel that this is an opportunity for anyone who wants to make a difference in people's lives, to put yourself forward. Whether you put yourself forward as a Member of Parliament, committee, et cetera, whatever the case may be to make a difference in the lives of the people who surround us.

So today, as you know, every time I come here, I give birthday wishes to our seniors. Many seniors are surprising, are so excited to hear their names on the radio. To be acknowledged when they are alive as opposed to all the wonderful things you say when people die. So today I am going to ask Members of this House and the listening audience to take the opportunity to pick up the phone today—not text, not WhatsApp—and to call your parents (mother, father if you still have the opportunity for them to be alive) and to say, *Thank you*, to express your appreciation and gratitude for all they have done for you. Honour your mother and father.

The other thing I want to share . . . we all want to live long. But the most important thing is not just that we live long, but we live healthy. Because no one wants to be a burden to their family. So, I am encouraging everyone to make a difference in their own lives, whether you are eating better, whether you are jogging, whether you are exercising, whether you are going to the doctor. Nothing is worse than living long and living unhealthy. And as you are aware, by 2025 we are going to have approximately 25 [per cent] going on 30 [per cent] (numbers could be a little off) of people over the age of 65. And because they are living longer, if they are not taking care of themselves, they are actually dealing with major health issues.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: So, you are not going to see the end of me. This is the end of my political journey, but I will continue doing work with our seniors. Advocating for our seniors, letting them be aware of the services and the initiatives that this Government provides for us. I will continue taking calls. I will continue giving advice and support to our seniors in this community. And we do have a number of seniors sitting in this room actually who may have to pick up the phone and call me.

[Laughter]

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Actually, there are a lot of seniors in this room that are over the age of 65.

An Hon. Member: Oh!

The Speaker: Yes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Right? So, I will say I am proud to have been a member of the Progressive Labour Party, as a Member of Parliament. I am proud to know that this Progressive Labour Party Government to me is the best Government to serve the best interests of the people of Bermuda.

[Desk thumping]

Several Hon. Members: Yes.

Mrs. Ianthia Simmons-Wade: Thank you.

So, as I close, I would again like to thank my colleagues on both sides of the House, my family, my friends and everyone who has supported and encouraged me in this wonderful journey.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, MP.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: MP Famous, would you like your moment?

Mr. Christopher Famous: I won't need the 20 minutes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I want to take a moment and tell my parliamentary wife—

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: You ain't going anywhere yet. Chill out. Chill out. Chill out.

[Laughter]

SUPPORTING CONSTITUENTS IN THEIR DARKEST HOURS

Mr. Christopher Famous: Don't get all sentimental.

Mr. Speaker, every week that we are in here we give condolences—which is what we should do. Earlier this evening, I went to a viewing of a neighbour, a relative and someone who happened to be a constituent as well. And at that viewing, you know, the family came in, the immediate family, the standard family, the Black people's family, everybody came in and was giving hugs and talking about the good old days and blah, blah, blah.

What is my point, Mr. Speaker? I have two points. The two points is that the reality is that some of those people at that viewing this evening, next year this time some of them are going to be viewed. It might be me. Right?

My point is that we have to take time to tell people what they mean to us.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: While they can still hear our voices. Maybe their spirit can hear us. I do not know. But it is very important because this year has been a year that we have all lost many, many people in this country. I do not know what the statistics are, but I just think there were a lot of people lost this year.

The second thing I am saying, Mr. Speaker, which ties into what MP Simmons-Wade just said, going to viewings is part of our responsibility as politicians. If someone . . . there are 1,200 people in there, at least 1,200 . . . what do they call that? . . . constituents in everybody's constituency. Since the time I have been elected to now, at least 200 of my constituents have passed away. Mostly seniors; some not so much seniors.

But the point I am getting at is I have tried to attend as many of those services as possible. But it is very important for the families to see that you are not just there for that vote come election day. You are there for them in their darkest hour. And when you are burying your mama or your daddy or your son, that is your darkest hour, and they just want to see support.

So, I encourage as many as my parliamentary colleagues, whichever side you are on, to attend—not just get up and say *Oh, I am bringing condolences*. But to go and attend those services because it means much to those—they might not even vote for you, but it still means a lot to them.

LEADERSHIP: NOT EVERYONE ELECTED IS A LEADER

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Speaker, my substantive part will not take long and ties again into something that MP Simmons-Wade said. It is about leadership. Mr. Speaker, leaders are people who raise the

standards by which they judge themselves and by which they are willing to be judged. I will tell you who said that later on.

Since the dawn of democracy, there have been elected persons. Anybody can get elected. You just need 51 per cent of the vote. But not everybody elected is a leader. That is the reality. Leaders must be prepared to do things that are unpopular at times, but they know it is right. Leaders must be prepared to be educated so they can educate others. I do not necessarily mean in university but educate yourself on a topic. Example, Deputy Premier Roban has educated himself on climate change, the environment and so many other things. Regionally he is well-respected. Others in the Opposition have educated themselves on so many different things.

So even if we disagree, you know, *Okay, all right. Well, Scott does have that right, but I ain't going to tell him at the time.* But the point I am saying is—

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: The point I am saying, Mr. Speaker, anyone can get elected. Anyone. Some people are just dumb and lucky and get elected. But they are not leaders. Leaders must also be prepared to face the fire.

If you are a batsman, you have to be able to take the bowlers, the bowlers that is coming with spin or googly or whatever. If you cannot do that, you are not a batsman. If you as a politician cannot face criticism head on . . . a couple of weeks ago, a month ago I will say, I would say there were a good 75 persons downstairs, young and old, came and brought their complaint to the Minister of Education. It caused him to take a different route. But he faced the people. That is part of leadership, Mr. Speaker. I am going to go again: anyone could get elected; not everybody is a leader.

Leaders must also be humble, Mr. Speaker. When they realise, *Hey, I messed up or I miscalculated. It was not purposely, but I miscalculated*—tell that to the people. Do not blame it on somebody else. Admit what you did was . . . not necessarily wrong, but there was a shortcoming somewhere. People will respect you for that.

So, as I close, Mr. Speaker, I wish my parliamentary colleagues, whichever side they are on, whether they serve in this House or the other place, a good Christmas. Take time out for your family because God knows we all have neglected our family somewhere along the line. When the New Year comes and we get ready for election season, right, some are already in election season. When you go to people, do that in earnest and be prepared to not just be elected but prepared to be a leader.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Famous.
MP Cannonier—

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes.

The Speaker: You have your 20 minutes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I am going to let you speak.

[Laughter]

TOUGH SITUATIONS IN BERMUDA NEED SOLUTIONS

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Mr. Speaker, I am going to try and move swiftly. There are a couple of topics I want to hit.

The first one is Part III, the first section of this insurance thing that I have been speaking to on . . . it is starting to be a fairly regular basis. And then we see worldwide where insurance company (UnitedHealthcare) has been shoved into the spotlight for an unfortunate and certainly devastating situation during this Christmas season, where a [CEO] has lost his life. But out of it all, and watching it closely, some of the rumours that are going around about acquisitions also of other health care facilities by UnitedHealthcare, I learned an interesting statistic. And that statistic was the number one reason for bankruptcy in families' lives is health care.

The Speaker: Health care.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I had no clue that the devastation of not being able to provide . . . or having difficulty with getting health care was so devastating for many families. The number one reason for bankruptcy in the United States—yes, in the United States—is health care.

So, we have been hearing a whole lot about the greed of the bureaucracy of health care and the corporate entities and these boards and the like. And I am just hoping that . . . and I keep saying it, that we can find a way to negotiate with these insurance companies so that we in Bermuda can find a way. Every single one of us, all 36 of us in the House of Assembly here, have experienced tragedies. And it has been brought to our attention of tragedies with not being able to afford health care in Bermuda.

And so, for this Christmas season I am hoping that Bermuda will gain some hope, as my honourable colleague behind me talked of hope, that we will as legislators find a way to negotiate. I am not saying that it has to be controversial but that we do find a way to be able to assist and bring some census to this issue of ensuring that everyone can get affordable health care.

It would be wonderful if health care could be given free to everyone. But we know that is not the world that we live in. Everything has a price to it. And so, I will bring the latter part of that Part III later on when we come back into the House of Assembly. Notwithstanding the . . . and quite frankly I keep hearing *This may be my last time* before an election—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: There certainly is a window of opportunity, I am sure, just after Christmas. We will see if that happens. The only one with that crystal ball is the Premier. So let us see.

It would be remiss of me to say that, quite frankly with, like I said all of these Christmas gifts today (that I am calling that) that were dropped from the Pre-Budget [Report], some might say, already saying on the blogs especially, some may say that it is on its way. And so, I hope that . . . I hope that the Government is prepared just like the Opposition is preparing for an election. Because we recognise that it has to come soon.

There are, during this holiday season, a lot of people living in stress. And that is just a fact. We have talked about it in the House, facts. [The fact] that despite the numbers that we may throw out that say things are wonderful and the likes, people still are feeling the stress of living in Bermuda. And one of those is health care. The other is groceries and the like. The others are BELCO bills. It is tough. And we still are having difficulty finding a way to make it through this situation.

Now, I have given solutions to what I thought should happen. I will leave it at that. But the reality is, when we have people picketing this House of Assembly and I saw someone yesterday walking around with a . . . picketing the Cabinet grounds with a placard. There are some harsh realities out there as we head on into this Christmas. And I wish and want well for everyone. I wish and want peace and prosperity for everyone in Bermuda. Our reality is not that. And many times, in this House we may tout, and it was a hard lesson for the OBA to understand that you may be making things financially better in Bermuda, but Bermudians were not feeling the love. And so, my call to the Premier and his team is that there are still too many people not feeling the love.

As we go on into this new year, it is stressful, yes. And I am thinking about what took place—two days ago I was walking on Church Street, and a lady came out with her husband and literally forcefully grabbed my arm and pulled me. And I went, *Nah, nah, nah. What is going on here?* And something so simple had stressed her out and I began to realise there was more to the story, but all she wanted was a letter of reference from a large telecommunications company and they would not do it for her.

And what I did find out was all she needed was this reference letter to help her fix a situation (and I will not give up all her business because I am going to help her to fix her situation) that she was in, and a letter of reference would have sufficed from this company. Just simply stating that she had been a customer and never had a problem with her bill. That is all. And the company would not do it. I do not get that. It doesn't take much for that. Especially knowing the company and the profits that it does make. It doesn't take much. But for whatever reason that was not their policy.

Three weeks ago, I was on Front Street, and we all know the situation. A friend of mine . . . I never said it in the House, but we were privy to an unfortunate death of a young man. The Arruda family lost their son. And he was on Front Street and just uncontrollably crying. He had come into town and, I guess, just coming into town, getting close to the season of Christmas really had a terrible effect on him. And I hugged him up which seemed like forever, to let him know there is just no way that I can identify with that, but I was there. And I went on to say I recognised that many of us as parliamentarians are there for him. And that many in this House had spoken dearly about him. He also recognised and thanked, said to me, *I thank the Premier for coming, spending time with the family.*

But this Christmas is going to be tough because the reality in Bermuda is our young people could just pass away for a chain. That is devastating. So, whatever we need to do as parliamentarians during the season is we need to take on those realities in an extremely serious manner. And not to say that we aren't in many ways, but I think many times we are taking too long. We have access to so much information that we can move quicker with things. We can move more swiftly. And we also can be thorough at the same time. So, I am imploring us in this House of Assembly, as we get ready for Christmas and New Year's and even potentially, Mr. Speaker, as some may have said, this may be their last time in the House of Assembly before an election. We can do better.

And there is one other family that I feel for, been to church with them many, many times in the Adventist family and that is the Warren family. I am feeling for them right now because there doesn't seem to be just closure for them. And I am hoping that in this new year they find closure. That the Warren family, Bean and the Russell family find closure for such a devastating situation that they are in. It cannot be easy. But for the grace of God, there go us. Any one of us could be in their position right now. Any one of us.

The realities are not the same as when I grew up as a kid. They are a bit harsher and a wrong turn could be fatal. Whether walking around the corner at the wrong time . . . in Bermuda no one would have thought that we would see the things that we are see-

ing today. And so, it is time. People are frustrated. They are tired. It is time for the rubber to meet the road and let us get some things done.

I want to thank the Government for the good that they have done. I want to thank the One Bermuda Alliance for the good that they have done. And unlike the Honourable Member that spoke to they believe that the PLP Government is the best Government to run the country—

[Desk thumping]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: What I would say is this: the best people to run this country are the people of this country. Let them choose if they want to go with the colour red or blue or green. They can choose that. But at the end of the day, it is time Bermuda. It is time. Because the rubber has met the road. We have some complicated issues before us in this Island. Very complicated. We did a Bill today . . . complicated. Not an easy solution. Not an easy solution at all. But the one thing that overcomes all of these things, Mr. Speaker, is this: is working together.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Working together.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: I said to the Premier the other day that . . . we want to work on a Bill, then let's work on a Bill together then. Don't bring the Bill after you have done it. Let us work on the Bill together if we have to so we can resolve those issues beforehand and come into this House holding hands with the Bill done. Dusted.

So, if the Premier decides to call an election, I will give the commitment that if they wish to, we win the election, if they wish to collaborate in the likes that I have, let it be so. It was back in 2013, 2012, Mr. Speaker, that I offered a Cabinet position to the Opposition.

An Hon. Member: How was that going to work?

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: Because I felt that we needed to come together. It was also back in 2013 that I called for a day of prayer and brought all of the religions together so that we could find a way to come together for the betterment of the country. I stand by that today.

[Laughter]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: And will continue to stand by that. And come what may, it gets contentious in this House—sure it does get contentious in this House

because I believe that on both sides we are passionate about the fact that we want a better Bermuda.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Another Hon. Member: Absolutely.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: We want a better Bermuda. And so, some of this talk about just asking questions to ask questions, it is nonsense. If there is a question to be asked, you may not like it, but it has got to be asked. I did not always like questions when we, some of the questions that were asked when we were Government. But we have to answer them. We had to answer them. Just like the Honourable Minister Famous said . . . I am sorry. I am giving him a Ministry now.

Mr. Christopher Famous: What's going to happen when we win?

[Laughter]

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: So, the Honourable Member Famous, just like he mentioned, you know, leadership is not easy. Leadership is not easy. You have to be able to stand the tide, come what may. There will always be something that somebody has got to say about you. But if you lead with integrity and you stand for what you believe in, then others will see that. Others will see that.

Our reality right now is it is time. It is time for that change. And whatever that looks like, Mr. Speaker, I implore the people of Bermuda . . . you have been telling us it is time. You have also been telling us what that time is for. It is up to us as parliamentarians to listen. It is up to us to make those dreams come true. It is up to us to instil that hope that there could be and should be a better day and that trust needs to be instilled within the people that we will do everything we possibly can to help avoid what the Warren family has had to go through and what the Arruda family has been going through and what many others have been going through when we debated the national plan for the reduction of crime.

It is time, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the One Bermuda Alliance I want to say Merry Christmas, Happy New Year to all 36 in this place, 35 . . . I am the 36th I guess.

The Speaker: Thirty-six.

Mr. L. Craig Cannonier: And to the rest of Bermuda, whether it be from St. David's (because it is further out than St. George's) to Dockyard. Merry Christmas to you. And during this tough time, if we can help, every 36 one of us will be there. Merry Christmas, Mr. Speaker, Happy New Year to you if I do not see you before. Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Cannonier.

Does any other Member wish to . . . MP Campbell.

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

The Speaker: Yes.

VOTE FOR CHANGE

Mr. Vance Campbell: Mr. Speaker, like most speakers that have gone before me, I would like to wish Bermuda a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Most importantly, I trust that everyone and their families will enjoy a safe holiday season.

However, having said that, we know not everyone will have a happy Christmas. Whether it is because they are struggling to put food on the table, they do not have any money for gifts, nowhere to stay. Whereas my colleague who spoke before me they are mourning the loss of a loved one. And as we come to the end of another year, I ask members of the public given that there are signs that an election is upon us, and the writ could be dropped as soon as next week after the Senate session.

I ask members of the public to reflect back to 1998 and ask themselves are they better off now than in 1998. I ask them to reflect back to 2017 and ask themselves are they better off—

An Hon. Member: They are better off.

Mr. Vance Campbell: —now than they were in 2017. I ask members of the public to look back to January 1 of this year and ask themselves are they better off now than they were then.

If your answer to those questions is no, that your circumstances are not better today than any of those timeframes that I indicated before, I encourage you to make a change. Whenever the election is called, do not be afraid. When you go into that booth, do not be afraid to vote for change. Times and people change, Mr. Speaker. And today we are living in a different era than yesterday. Change is necessary. It is a necessary part of life. And change, if managed properly, is good. No one should be afraid of change—

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Vance Campbell: —if they believe change is required for the greater good.

Now my colleague to my right who just finished speaking . . . he spoke of some gifts (as he referred to them as gifts) that the Premier spoke of earlier today in his Statement. And I also am reminded of

some other gifts that the Premier spoke of in September—\$25 million worth of gifts.

An Hon. Member: Hmmm.

Mr. Vance Campbell: And I am saying to the voting public, it would seem that the Government wants you to forget about anything prior to three months ago. They want you to forget about the saga, the long-suffering saga of education reform. They want you to forget that the teachers have said that the education system is at its breaking point. They want you to forget that Whitney [Institute Middle School] and St. George's Prep have now joined West End Warriors and St. David's Warriors.

They want you to forget about the homelessness, the high cost of living, the high cost of health insurance. They want you to forget about the crime in this country and the neglected infrastructure. No one should be afraid of change if they believe change is required for the greater good.

So, when the Premier calls the election, whether it is next week Wednesday or some other time, I encourage the voting public to vote for change and vote for the One Bermuda Alliance.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, MP Campbell.

Does any other Member wish to . . . Premier, you have your 20 minutes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Come on, Scott. Give us one for the holidays, Scott.

An Hon. Member: No.

Hon. E. David Burt: All right, Mr. Speaker. We might make it to Somerset by—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: You might make it to Somerset for 10.

PLP'S SOUND GOVERNANCE

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, we have had a long year. And it is interesting to listen to Members on the other side talking about voting for change. Because, Mr. Speaker, for the last seven years that is precisely what this Government has delivered. And despite the trials and tribulations, despite a once-in-a-century global pandemic, despite the risks that have faced our international business industry which have caused numerous persons to state that Bermuda will no longer be a premier international finance jurisdiction, whether they be the Trump tax cuts, whether they be

economic substance from the OECD, whether they be the Paradise Papers or whether they be the Global Minimum Tax . . . and look where we are today, Mr. Speaker.

This Government has delivered a balanced budget. This Government has delivered tax reductions. This Government has delivered labour reforms. This Government has expanded health care and child care assistance. This Government has invested record amounts of money in affordable housing. This Government continues to deliver when it comes to our vulnerable persons in our society through the work of the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. This Government has delivered international companies on our shores through the Economic Recovery Plan. The Deputy Premier was able to get Google to our shores. These are the things that we are delivering, Mr. Speaker.

And so, it is rich . . . absolutely rich to listen to the other side when they presided over a stagnating economy full—they chuckle, Mr. Speaker, but the Honourable seemingly new Leader of the One Bermuda Alliance again, because when he got up and spoke, I was like, *Oh, my*. He seems to forget that he promised to create 2,000 jobs and actually lost 2,000 jobs. He seems to forget that they promised that they would reduce the debt and yet they doubled the debt in their time in office.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: They seem to forget and think that the people of this country will forget their absolutely poor record of governance. I am happy I woke them up, Mr. Speaker, because what we were intending to do was to close out the session on a high note. But I know that is what you were intending to do, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: But here . . . oh, the chirping has started. Guess what, Mr. Speaker?

An Hon. Member: Interpolations.

Hon. E. David Burt: They decided to lay down the gauntlet. But it seems as though they are actually afraid of the day. Well, let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. Whether or not we are back for the budget, rest assured, Mr. Speaker, this Government has delivered. And there is absolutely no question of the change that we have delivered over the last seven years.

Now here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. Every government will face problems and challenges because the world is a complex and changing place. Listen to what the Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors said earlier, when she spoke about her visit to a high school and the work of which are

doing at intervention at young levels. The additional investment of which we are doing for our seniors through our community. That, Mr. Speaker, is the record of this particular Government.

And everyone knows when it comes to investing in our vulnerable, when it comes to investing in our communities, when it comes to investing in our public service they know, understand, what the Progressive Labour Party stands for and what this Government has delivered, Mr. Speaker. And I did find it very interesting, incredibly interesting, that the former Leader of the One Bermuda Alliance—maybe soon again to be the Leader of the One Bermuda Alliance after they lose the next election and have to pick a new leader, Mr. Speaker—maybe he missed what was said earlier today. Because it was amazing that he spoke about health care. This coming from a Government that tried to restrict access to mammograms for women.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: This coming from a Government that refused, *refused*, to increase seniors' pensions.

Now let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. In the Pre-Budget Report that was delivered today, we are funding universal health care. We have frozen government health insurance premiums for three years in a row. We are continuing to invest in our people to keep their costs at bay. There is a reason, Mr. Speaker—there is a reason, Mr. Speaker, why business confidence is up. There is a reason, Mr. Speaker, why jobs are up. There is a reason, Mr. Speaker, why inflation in this country is moderated.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: It is because of sound governance.

And here is the funny thing, Mr. Speaker. They may chirp as much as they want to chirp. But the record of delivery is there for all to see. And what did we do today, Mr. Speaker? Despite the calls for delay, despite the political chatter of trying to say *No, no, no*, we passed a Clean Air Amendment Bill.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: That is going to strengthen protections for persons inside of our community. And that, Mr. Speaker, is what is the record of this Government. Sound governance, tackling the problems, examining the issues, coming up with solutions and advancing those matters through.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I started by saying, it has been a year. We have accomplished a lot. And as I said in my Statement to open the House today, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have to look forward to a brighter future. It falls to me, Mr. Speaker, to wish the country a Merry Christmas. This is a time and a sea-

son of giving. A time and a season of sharing. A time and a season for love and a time and a season for hope. And those themes were perfectly encapsulated by the Maiden Speech from our new Member for constituency 36 who opened her account in this House today. And I know, Mr. Speaker, that there will be many more.

Now there are some who spoke today, the Colonel spoke and said it was his last time a few times ago and said this time he might be speaking again. But here is the reality, Mr. Speaker, there is a group of people in this House who have committed themselves to service. Who have worked day in and day out to do their best to deliver for the people of this country. And when I walk on the highways and byways in this country, on the doorsteps and other things, here is what I hear, Mr. Speaker: *Thank you. Keep it up. Good work. Need to do some adjustments here.* But most importantly, Mr. Speaker, they know, recognise and understand that this Government cares for the working people of this country.

This Government cares to make sure that we right the historical wrongs. This Government cares to make sure that we fix the things that are broken and make sure that we build a strong foundation. So, whether it is making sure that we expand access to education (of which we have), whether it is to expand access to health care (which we have), whether it is reducing taxes, reducing costs, putting money in people's pockets (which we have), that record will continue, Mr. Speaker.

And when we return there will be a budget to be delivered. First budget surplus in 21 years. Record investment throughout and a path to reduce this country's debt. That, Mr. Speaker, is the change that we have delivered.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

Hon. E. David Burt: So as I close, Merry Christmas to you, Mr. Speaker. Merry Christmas to your family. To all Honourable Members on both sides of the House, I wish everyone a very happy and safe holiday because service is difficult. We sacrifice time from our families. But let us remember the reason for the season. Let us share with each other the love and hope for the future and may we return back to this place, Mr. Speaker, rejuvenated to continue the work of delivering that change that this Progressive Labour Party Government has delivered for the last seven years.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

SPEND TIME WITH THOSE WE LOVE DURING THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

The Speaker: Thank you, Premier.

Members have said much this evening in reference to the close and what season this is and normally I follow along with that line with a few remarks. But I think I am just going to be brief tonight and emphasise that we should take this time to not only be warm and kind to everybody but remember those loved ones that are near us. Those that are close to us. And it is only in a moment that that can be affected.

Some in this room may know I received a phone call that woke me last night from a loved one that was very frightening. And . . . it got me out of bed instantly to attend to the situation. And in that moment of seeing what we were dealing with reminded me of just how thin a line that we live on in a sense in how things can turn in the flick of a moment that affect your family.

That experience not just . . . not even 24 hours ago. It is fresh in my mind that in this season let us remember to take time out for those that we love, close to us, because it was said earlier that in the job that we do here we do sacrifice the time with our families in so many different ways. In so many ways. And we do it because we are committed to the country. We are committed to trying to do the best for those who elected us to be here. But our families are those that are really affected by our life and our presence. And in a moment, it can be taken away from us. So love those in a special way this holiday season that are close to you because it could be gone in a flash.

With those few remarks, have a good Christmas season and we look forward to seeing you in February.

The House now stands adjourned until February 14.

[Gavel]

[At 9:13 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 14 February 2025.]