



**2025/26 SESSION**  
of the  
**BERMUDA SENATE**

**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**5 JUNE 2025**

*Sitting number 8 of the 2025/2026 Session*  
(pages 283–364)

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

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

**BERMUDA SENATE  
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT  
5 JUNE 2025  
10:02 AM**

*Sitting Number 8 of the 2025/2026 Session*

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

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

### PRAYERS

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

**The President:** Please be seated.

### CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

*[Minutes of 2 June 2025]*

**The President:** Senator Tawana Tannock, you have the floor.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Madam President, I move that the consideration of the Minutes of the meeting of Monday, 2 June 2025 be taken as read.

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

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Madam President, I move that the Minutes of Monday, 2 June 2025 be confirmed.

**The President:** Is there any objection to that motion?  
No objection. The minutes are confirmed.

*[Minutes of 2 June 2025 confirmed]*

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Madam President, I move that consideration of the Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, 4 June 2025 be deferred.

**The President:** Is there any objection to that motion?  
No objection.  
The minutes are [deferred].  
Thank you, Senator Tawana Tannock.

*[Minutes of 4 June 2025 deferred]*

### MESSAGES

**The President:** Mrs. Beale.

**The Deputy Clerk:** There are no messages, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Mrs. Beale.

### REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**The President:** There are none.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**The President:** There are none.

### NOTICES OF MOTION

**The President:** There are none.

### PETITIONS

**The President:** There are none.

### STATEMENTS

**The President:** There is one Statement this morning, and that is in the name of Senator the Honourable Crystal Caesar, the spokesperson for Finance.  
Minister, you have the floor.

*[Pause]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Good morning, Madam President, and thank you. Apologies.

### BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, in accordance with section 28 of the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969, I am pleased to table the [Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report 2024](#) (the "Report").  
Bermuda's financial services sector is subject to the regulation and supervision of the Bermuda Monetary Authority (the "Authority"). The Authority operates pursuant to the Bermuda Monetary Authority Act 1969 (the "Act"), which provides it with a number of principal objects, including the supervision, regulation and inspection of financial institutions operating in or from within Bermuda, together with the promotion of financial stability and soundness of financial institutions.

Madam President, the Senate would be aware that the Authority has specific licensing and supervisory responsibilities under the following regulatory statutes: the Banks and Deposit Companies Act; Corporate Service Provider Business Act; the Digital Asset Business Act; the Insurance Act; the Investment Business Act; the Investment Funds Act; Money Service Business Act; the Fund Administration Provider Business Act; the Trusts (Regulation of Trust Business) Act, together with other statutes. The Authority also regulates the Bermuda Stock Exchange.

#### Mission

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, the Authority's mission is to contribute to Bermuda's financial stability, protect customers of financial services and protect Bermuda's currency through maintaining effective and proactive regulatory frameworks through its highly skilled and engaged workforce; delivering efficient operations and sustainable business practices; and supporting responsible innovation locally and in global markets.

#### International Recognition

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, the Authority has received international recognition for its regulatory excellence, being one of only seven jurisdictions with US National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) "qualified jurisdiction" status, one of three jurisdictions to have received the NAIC reciprocal jurisdiction status, and one of just two jurisdictions in the world to be granted full Solvency II equivalence by the European Union.

Madam President, the Authority is active in key international organisations, fostering strong global relationships. The Authority's Managing Director, Supervision of the Authority serves on the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS) Executive Committee with the Authority's staff leading or contributing to numerous IAIS Committees, including those on macroprudential, policy and financial crime.

Madam President, the Authority also engages with the Financial Stability Board Regional Consultative Group Americas and participates in and contributes to the Bank for International Settlements and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Insurance and Private Pensions Committee.

The Authority is also a coordination group member of the Global Financial Innovation Network, a group of regulators committed to supporting financial innovation in the best interests of consumers.

#### Legislation

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, the Authority is authorised to advise the Minister of Finance on policy matters relating to financial institutions and

may propose legislation consistent with its responsibilities under the Bermuda Monetary Act 1969 (the Act). Amongst the legislative proposals advanced in 2024 were those which bolstered the regime under which recognised investment exchanges and recognised clearing houses are supervised and regulated; a Ministerial Order, for the minimum initial net assets [required] of Restricted Banks at the time of licensing and expanded the classes of persons to whom such banks may provide services; and measures to amend the fees payable by entities operating within the Authority's innovation hub.

Additionally, rules were passed regarding the requirements for insurers to create a recovery plan, the contents of such plans, and the matters which the Authority shall consider when determining which insurers need to prepare a recovery plan. Regulations were also issued to enable the Authority to refresh the form and design of coins to feature the image of His Majesty King Charles III.

#### Supervision and Licensing

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, Senators' attention is drawn to the following key highlights for the various sectors supervised by the Authority:

##### Banking Sector

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** With regard to the banking sector, consolidated assets of the banking sector remained unchanged at \$23.7 billion in 2024. Investments retained the largest share of total assets at 53.0 per cent (49.1 per cent in 2023), followed by loans at 33.0 per cent (35.6 per cent in 2023), and cash and deposits at 11.0 per cent (11.3 per cent in 2023). Net interest income continued to be the largest component of the banking sector's income at \$755 million (\$790 million in 2023).

##### Insurance Sector

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, moving to the insurance sector, 1,239 insurers were registered as of 31 December 2024 compared to 1,213 in 2023. According to 2023 year-end information, total capital and surplus was \$404 billion in 2023 an increase of \$57 billion from the \$347 billion recorded in 2022.

Gross premiums written were \$316 billion in 2023 an increase of \$39 billion from the \$277 billion recorded in 2022. The increase is attributed to the growth in business written by large, commercial, general business and long-term insurers. Total assets were [\$1.87] trillion in 2023 an increase of \$217 billion from \$1.65 trillion in 2022. This increase was largely due to increased business written by a specific group of insurers.

### Investment Sector

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, moving to the investment sector, there were 52 licensed investment business providers, an increase of 5 from 47 in 2023, and 56 registered investment business providers operating in Bermuda in 2024. The aggregate total assets under management [AUM] reported by licensed investment providers were US\$231 billion compared to US\$225 billion AUM in 2023. Total assets under administration (AUA) for 2024 were US\$25.4 billion, compared to US\$28.1 billion reported for 2023.

Madam President, in 2024, there were 784 investment funds on the Investment Funds Act register, a decrease of 20 compared to 804 in 2023. Of these, 129 overseas funds being promoted in Bermuda and 655 Bermuda funds. This is contrasted against 2023, whereby 146 overseas funds were promoted in Bermuda and Bermuda funds totalled 658, with a net asset value reported in relation to Bermuda funds of \$295 billion, an increase from \$281 billion in 2023. At the end of 2024, 24 fund administrator licences were in issue, unchanged from the prior year, with \$195.6 billion in assets under administration.

### Digital Asset Business Sector

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, 2024 was a significant year of growth for the digital asset business sector which ended the year with 36 digital asset business providers operating in Bermuda, a 50 per cent increase from the 24 recorded in 2023. This sector is continuing to demonstrate strong growth and is expected to become the third largest revenue earner for the Authority during the upcoming year. This growth is a testament to this Government's foresight in ensuring that Bermuda established a credible regime for this emerging sector, which has been in place since 2018.

### Bermuda Stock Exchange

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, the total equity market capitalisation of the Bermuda Stock Exchange stood at \$217.6 billion at the end of 2024 as compared with \$191.7 billion at the end of 2023. A total of 156 new insurance-linked securities were added to the BSX in 2024 a reduction from 195 new issues recorded in 2023. Domestic trading volume totalled 11.3 million shares in 2024 up significantly from 2.3 million in 2023, with the value of shares traded totalled \$105.8 million (\$20.4 million in 2023).

### BMA Financial Highlights

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, Members' attention is drawn to the following highlights set out in the Statement of Accounts Report:

- Net income for the Authority was \$17.93 million up from a net loss of \$3.53 million in the previous year.
- Total revenue increased by 50 per cent up to \$129.8 million, up from \$86.7 million. The increase is mainly due to a \$40 million increase in revenue from supervisory and licensing fees.
- Expenses increased by 24 per cent to \$111.9 million. The increase was mainly due to the \$15.5 million in increased salaries and benefits.
- Licensing fees were \$114.5 million at year-end as compared with \$74.4 million of which \$103 million was paid by the insurance sector.
- The receipt of funds from fines and penalties increased by \$2.554 million from the previous year.
- The Authority had 302 full-time permanent employees, an increase from 273 in 2023.
- Board Members are paid an annual fee of \$50,000, an increase of \$26,000 in 2023; Board Sub Committee Chairs are paid an annual fee of \$58,000 to \$63,000, up from \$33,000 in 2023. The Chairman of the Board receives an annual fee of \$125,000, an increase from \$96,000 in 2023.
- The CEO's salary is set at \$550,000 up from \$500,000 in 2023, and he is eligible for a performance-based bonus of up to 50 per cent of base salary. The salaries of the other 20 members of the executive team range from \$275,000 to \$500,000 in 2024, with a performance-based bonus of up to 37 per cent (in 2023, that was 37 per cent of salary as well).

Madam President, upon reviewing the Authority's 2024 financial statements, the Auditor General has issued a clean opinion.

Madam President, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the Authority's Board, chaired by former Cabinet Secretary Mr. Donald Scott. I also wish to extend special thanks to the executive team and dedicated staff of the Authority, under the leadership of Chief Executive Officer Mr. Craig Swan. The Board and the executive team deserve the Senate's congratulations for their sound stewardship and the excellent financial results achieved in 2024. The Government is especially grateful for the continued partnership and collaboration with the Authority's leadership, as we remain focused on expanding and strengthening Bermuda's financial services sector in a globally competitive environment.

And that ends my presentation. Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** And thank you, Senator the Honourable Crystal Caesar, spokesperson for Finance.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

**The President:** There are none.

## FIRST READING OF PUBLIC BILLS

**The President:** There are none.

## FIRST READING OF PRIVATE BILLS

**The President:** There are none.

## QUESTION PERIOD

**The President:** Senators, we will entertain questions on the Statement that just has been given by Senator Caesar, spokesperson for Finance.

Senator Marcus Jones, you have the floor.

### QUESTION 1: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Good morning, Madam President. Good morning to fellow Senators. Good morning to the listening public.

Thank you to the Minister of Education, spokesperson for Finance, for that Statement this morning. I just have a few questions.

<sup>1</sup>How does the BMA plan to manage the rapid expansion of the digital assets sector while ensuring robust consumer protection?

### QUESTION 2: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** I took note of the significant increases in executive compensations from the Minister's brief. And my question would be, given the dramatic increase in executive compensation and board fees, what benchmarks or justifications were used for these significant increases?

### QUESTION 3: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** And my final question is, how does the BMA measure the effectiveness of its supervisory frameworks across sectors?

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Marcus Jones, Opposition Leader [in the Senate].

Senator Tawana Tannock, you have the floor.

### QUESTION 1: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Thank you, Madam President.

My first question relates to information sharing, and it's with regard to the upcoming CIT. And my question is regarding any information . . . what is the level of information shared by the BMA to the Ministry of Finance or to the newly formed Corporate Income Tax Commission with regard to, in particular, entities who have already declared deferred tax assets in their financial returns to the BMA? Is that information shared to the other relevant authorities?

### QUESTION 2: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** My second question is about the number of employees in the BMA. And of that number of employees in the BMA, the number of employees who work remotely and the number of employees who are work permit holders.

## SUPPLEMENTARIES

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** And my follow-up question to that is, of those who work remotely, is there any move to get them to work in person in the office?

And then my second question, my second question to the follow-up to the work permit question is, for those work permits that have been issued, what are the training programmes, and have Bermudians been identified to take part in training programmes to take those posts? Thank you.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Tawana Tannock. Senator Cunningham, you have the floor.

### QUESTION 1: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Thank you, Madam President. Good morning.

I will just start off with the congratulations to the BMA. Obviously, they are very important to the regulatory reputation that Bermuda has. And my question, though, is it seems that the BMA is very reliant on the insurance sector, the licensing fees from insurers, and I am just wondering if they are too reliant on the funding from that one sector. So how sustainable would this revenue stream be if market conditions or indeed the CIT or licensing volumes change?

### QUESTION 2: BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** And then my second question to that would be, are there any upcoming changes to international regulatory standards that might impact our equivalent status with the EU or globally?

<sup>1</sup> See [response](#) at page 359

**QUESTION 3: BERMUDA MONETARY  
AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024**

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** And then my third question is how, you know, we are seeing the emerging sectors of FinTech and digital assets, so how is the BMA supporting local Bermudian participation in those sectors?

**SUPPLEMENTARY**

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** And a supplemental to that would be, are there initiatives (somewhat similar to my colleague) to ensure that training and job opportunities for Bermudians will appear in those regulated sectors? Thank you.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

*[Pause]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I assume that's it for questions from everyone.

**The President:** Yes, I don't see any other hands.

*[Laughter]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Okay. Thank you.

Madam President, with regard to specifically Senator Tannock's question with regard to the number of employees and those who are working locally versus those who work remotely, my understanding is that . . . and when she says remotely, I am assuming overseas. The majority of the employees who work for the Bermuda Monetary Authority are located locally. There are a cache of consultants that they would use who may work remotely, which obviously they would be on a fee basis, and so that would be because they have particular expertise that the BMA staff do not actually have locally. However, the majority of employees are actually working here on Island.

Now, in terms of local versus work permit holders, that is something that I would have to get additional information from the BMA on, as I do not have that at hand.

Now, with regard to the additional questions that other Senators have had, I have made a note of them all. I do not believe that I have received answers to them as yet; but I do undertake that . . . as and when I do get those answers, I undertake to provide those additional answers to Senators once I can get them from the technical team, from the BMA.

**The President:** Thank you very much, Senator Caesar.

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT****SENATE VISITORS**

**The President:** And Senators, that is the end of the Question Period, and we will now move on to the Orders of the Day.

But before we get into that, I would just like to acknowledge the presence of certain people in the Chamber. First of all, I would like to welcome Lieutenant-Colonel Edward Lamb, the Permanent Secretary for National Security, and Dean Lema, the Principal Customs Officer, and also Tarita Cartwright, the Ministry Comptroller of National Security. Welcome to you.

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**The President:** And so, we move on now to the Orders of the Day, and the Orders of the Day is the resolution into Committee of the Whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2025, together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the financial year [2025/26].

I call on Senator the Honourable Crystal Caesar, the Spokesperson for Finance.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Excuse me, Madam President.

Before we proceed—

**The President:** Yes.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Given that the technical officers are in the Senate at the moment in relation to Item 3—

**The President:** Yes.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** We would respectfully ask that we could take the Orders out of order and do Item 3 first, as opposed to Item 1.

**The President:** Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. We will certainly do that.

And so Item 3 then is . . . on our Orders of the Day, the second reading of the Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025, and that is in the name of Senator the Honourable Crystal Caesar, Spokesperson for Finance.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you.

**BILL****SECOND READING****CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT ACT 2025**

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President, and thank you to the team for coming in.

Madam President, Honourable [Senators] are requested to now give consideration to the Bill entitled the [Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025](#).

Madam President, the Bill proposes to amend the Customs Tariff Act 1970, the principal Act, with measures that:

1. lower the duty rate on building materials and supplies;
2. eliminate custom duties on all motor vehicle parts;
3. lower the duty rates on air conditioning units and parts;
4. increase the duty exemption for returning residents;
5. provide the continuing duty relief available to the Bermuda Hospitals Board for the hospital's operation supplies; and
6. lower the rate of duty for diesels and fuel oils used by BELCO for the production of electricity.

The measures of the Bill affect both the First Schedule and the Fifth Schedule to the principal Act.

Madam President, it is this Government's goal to lower the cost of living for Bermuda. In doing so, we are confident that we will not only ease the daily burden of making ends meet but also offer new opportunities for our economic development. One of the major tools that we have at our disposal in achieving this aim is by reducing the cost of selected imported goods by lowering rates of custom duties.

The Bill proposes to repeal and replace the First Schedule of the principal Act in order to lower the duty rates on building materials and supplies, and air conditioning units and parts, eliminate customs duties on motor vehicles parts, and increase the duty exemption for returning residents.

Madam President, the Bill will provide wide-ranging duty relief on a selected building materials, pre-fabricated supplies, and raw materials for both interior and exterior work. This includes, but is not limited to block, stones, glass, plastics, fabrics, wood, metal, chemicals, including glues, resins, and paint. The duty rates associated with 481 tariff codes will be lowered as follows:

- 429 tariff codes will be lowered from 25 per cent to 10 per cent, providing cost reductions of an estimated \$4.9 million;
- 8 tariff codes will be lowered from 15 per cent to 10 per cent, providing cost reductions of an estimate \$293,000; and
- 44 tariff codes will be lowered from 12.5 per cent to 10 per cent, providing cost reduction of an estimated \$325,000.

It is estimated based on prior year's data that these amendments will reduce the cost of construction and building repairs for revenue by \$5.5 million.

Madam President, the Bill will provide duty relief on air conditioning units and parts. The duty rates associated with 6 tariff codes will be lowered from

35 per cent to 10 per cent. It is estimated based on prior year's data that these amendments will reduce the duty cost on these items by over \$1.8 million.

Madam President, the Bill will provide wide-ranging duty relief on parts and supplies for motor vehicle repairs, including but not limited to engines, transmission shafts, gaskets, electrical, glass, belts, tubing, and interior furnishings. The duty rates associated with 65 tariff codes will be eliminated as follows:

- 43 tariff codes will go to zero per cent from 35 per cent, providing cost reduction of an estimated full revenue, \$2.5 million; and
- 22 tariff codes will go from 25 per cent to zero per cent, providing cost reductions of an estimate \$217,000. It is estimated based on prior year's data that these amendments will reduce the cost of repairing Bermuda's motor vehicles by a total of \$2.7 million.

Madam President, in order to effect the over 500 duty rate amendments necessary to lower the duty rates on building materials and supplies, air conditioning units and parts, and motor vehicle parts, a number of consequential amendments to the First Schedule of the principal Act were needed in order to maintain the structure of the Bermuda nomenclature. This necessitated the proposed introduction of 26 new tariff codes, the deletion of one tariff code, and the amendment of 12 tariff codes. Further, while conducting the review of the First Schedule to the principal Act, a further 12 textual inconsistencies were identified, which did not impact on any rates of duty in our proposed for amendment.

Madam President, the Bill next provides for an increase in duty exemption from \$200 per person to \$300 per person, an increase of 50 per cent. This rate allowance was last changed in 2012. Based on prior year's travel, this is expected to ease the collective tax burden on returning travellers by an estimated \$2 million.

Madam President, I now turn to the measures of the Bill affecting the Fifth Schedule to the principal Act.

Madam President, the Bill proposes to repeal and replace End-Use CPC 4240 so as to remove the existing end-use of condition limiting the period of duty relief for imported hospital operating supplies to 1 April 2022 through 31 March 2024 only. Honourable [Senators] will recall that CPC 4240 was amended in July of 2023 after being introduced in April of 2022, to extend the duty period relief within which qualifying goods must be imported to Bermuda to 31 March 2024 from 30 September 2023.

Madam President, after further consideration, the Minister of Finance, in keeping with the commitment of Government to ensure that our hospitals have adequate resources, considers it expedient to remove the end use condition requiring that hospital operating supplies be imported with a fixed time period. This amendment is intended to provide continuing duty relief

to hospitals administrated by the Bermuda Hospitals Board by offsetting operating expenses.

Madam President, the Bill next proposes to amend the End-Use CPC 4703 and CPC 4705 for the purpose of lowering the rate of duty for diesel and fuel oils used by BELCO for the production of electricity.

Madam President, in the 2025/26 Budget Statement in support of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, the Government acknowledged the frustration many feel when they open their BELCO bill. While the Government cannot control the cost of fuel on global markets, we are doing everything within the power to lower the underlying costs that contribute to those rates.

Madam President, in 2023 the duty on fuel used to generate electricity stood at 20 cents per litre. Honourable [Senators] will recall that in July of 2024 this Government reduced that tax by 60 per cent to 8 cents per litre. This Bill proposes to reduce the tax further to just 4 cents per litre. The combined effect of these changes will result in an 80 per cent reduction in this tax since 2023.

Madam President, this measure demonstrates the Government's commitment to delivering sustained relief on energy costs. While there is more work to be done across the energy sector, this initiative ensures that our tax policy supports lower electricity costs for every household and business in Bermuda. It is estimated based on prior years' data that this will cut the Bermudian electricity bill by \$1.7 million, in addition to concessions introduced during 2024/25.

Madam President, this further reduction in the duty paid on fuel is expected to reduce customs duty revenue by \$4.2 million. I will comment further on the measure of the Bill in Committee.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Caesar, Spokesperson for Finance.

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

### SENATE VISITOR

**The President:** And before I open it to Senators on the floor, I would just like to acknowledge the presence in the Chamber of Alsha Wilson, the Parliamentary Counsel. Welcome to you.

*[Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025, second reading debate continuing]*

**The President:** Would any Senator care to speak?

Senator Marcus Jones, Opposition Leader in the Senate, you have the floor.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Thank you, Madam President, and thank you to the Minister of Education, Spokesman for Finance, for bringing the Customs Tariff

[Amendment] Act [2025] to this Chamber at this time. And I will say right off at the start that any way that this Government can bring some relief to the major construction industry in this country would be supported by this side of the aisle for sure.

We do note that the tariff reduction went from 25 per cent to 10 per cent. We do applaud that reduction. It is an incredibly big document. If you sat and read the Schedule . . . and having looked over it with a cup of tea at midnight last night, something came up . . . something came to my observation that I would like for some clarity by the Minister if she can give it to us.

I was able to look and see that of all the reductions in tariffs, it appears that the electrical and plumbing materials section, those parts were not afforded the same tariff reduction as some of the other items. And I would like for her to speak to that because one would recognise that those two items within the construction industry are very important and an integral part of any building development. And one would think that those basic materials would be a part of this tariff reduction.

I do not know if it was an oversight that was made. Some clarity is what I am asking for if the Minister would provide that for us.

But in the spirit of reducing these tariffs for building supplies and materials, we are in support of that. Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** And thank you, Senator Marcus Jones.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Senator Tannock, you have the floor.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Thank you, Madam President. And I echo the congratulations said by my colleague, Senator Jones, to this reduction. I think anything that we can do to assist or hope to assist in the cost of living for Bermudians is great.

And so I think that leads into my question, which is, so if we reduce the cost of duty for air conditioners and air conditioning units and supplies and also construction items, how are we ensuring that that tax relief and the benefit of those tax reliefs will aid everyday Bermudians when they go into the store to buy an air conditioner to get their air conditioner fixed and for construction? So how are we able to ensure that this is passed on?

And I have to applaud the Government for the tax reliefs that they have made so far, [for] instance with sanitary products and also with seeds for growth. But how are we ensuring that these tax reliefs and the benefit that the businesses are getting from the tax reliefs are passed to the consumer?

So, I would like to know, of these new tax reliefs introduced, how will we ensure that this savings will be passed to everyday Bermudians? And that's my first question.

And then my second question is, we are looking at aiding construction firms and air conditioner repairmen, but yet we still have 25 per cent duty on pens,

pencils, toothbrushes, combs. I do not own my own home, and I am not looking to build a home because quite frankly right now I cannot afford it. But one thing I do is I buy pens and pencils. I brush my teeth. And, well actually I have dreadlocks, so I do not comb my hair, but many Bermudians do comb their hair every day.

So, what I would like to know is while these things are grand and I think anything we can do to reduce the cost of living is great, why are we not looking at the smaller items that Bermudians use every day, that our families use every day? Thank you.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Tannock.

While we are waiting for an answer, would any other Senator care to speak on this Bill?

Hearing none, then we will wait for a response from the Minister.

*[Pause]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, in relation to the question from Senator Jones with regard to electrical and plumbing materials, are there specific goods that the Senator is looking at? Because there is actually or has been a reduction on flex pipe and other plumbing fixtures. I am not sure if there was a specific area, item and what have you, but we would need to know which specific electrical goods the Senator is querying because electrical is a broad category. But as I mentioned, there are some reductions on things such as flex pipe and many other fixtures and fittings.

And with regard to the question from Senator Tannock with regard to indicating the reduction across the spectrum, this specific area of reductions is to assist the construction industry specifically, and that is why you would see it on building materials. There has been a cry publicly that the cost of building materials is exorbitant, so this will go a long way to ensuring that construction will continue at a pace where things can be brought in at cost and then the cost is not necessarily passed on to the builder.

And so, the Government has decided to focus specifically on that because there has been an appeal for the cost of construction materials to decrease and in doing so, this will help to lower costs for building, potentially for what the cost is of construction of a home, potentially the mortgage, et cetera, et cetera. So, it may very well filter down.

We will continue to look at reductions as it pertains to the cost of living for other goods and we will continue to do so and work with retailers and other vendors bringing things in. This specific area of reduction is . . . because there has been appeal, particularly in the construction area, to ensure that there is a reduction in the cost of building materials and construction materials in Bermuda.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister.

With that, then you move your Bill when you are ready.

*[Pause]*

*[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Following the suspension of . . . I am sorry, Madam President. Following . . .

I move that the Bill entitled the Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025 be now read a third time . . . second time . . . sorry.

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

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled the Customs Tariff Amendment Act be read a third . . .

*[Crosstalk]*

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 26

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that [Standing Order] 26 be suspended in respect of this Bill.

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

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Yes, I do have an objection.  
Madam President, maybe you can give me some guidance.

At this stage, I would like the opportunity to go into Committee to consider some of the items that were raised in my unreadiness and the questions that I asked.

Am I able to do that at this stage?

*[Crosstalk]*

**The President:** Is there a seconder to that motion?  
Senator Cunningham seconded. Then we will have a division.  
So, we are going to vote . . . on this decision.

*[Pause]*

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Excuse me, Madam President, and I do not know the protocol for this, but what is the question that Senator Jones is awaiting a response to?

**The President:** Senator Jones has . . . he says he has a number of issues, and he wanted to raise some questions, and he has asked to go into Committee so that he can present his objections . . . or further comment.

And so, our [Standing Orders] allow for us to do that if all Senators . . . Well, we are going to take a vote on it to determine whether or not Senators agree.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Okay, so Senator Jones is not awaiting an answer to a specific question. He just has further questions.

**The President:** He has further questions that he would like to take up in Committee . . . for further comment.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** So, the Clerk will do . . .

**The Deputy Clerk:** It has been moved to suspend Standing Order 26. If you are in agreement with the motion to suspend [Standing Order] 26 say Aye. If you are against and would prefer to go into Committee, say Nay.

## DIVISION

*[Suspension of Standing Order 26]*

### Ayes: 5

Sen. L. Bell  
Sen. the Hon. C. Caesar  
Sen. M. Fubler  
Sen. L. Simmons  
Sen. the Hon. K. Wilkerson

### Nays: 5

Sen. V. Cunningham  
Sen. M. Foley  
Sen. M. Jones  
Sen. T. Tannock  
Sen. the Hon. J. Dillas-Wright

### Absent: 1

Sen. J. Wight

**The Deputy Clerk:** With a tie vote of 5–5, the motion is lost. So that means we will go into Committee.

*[Motion to suspend Standing Order 26 lost (Standing Order 15).]*

**The President:** And I will call on Senator Tawana Tannock to chair the Committee.

## Senate in Committee at 10:53 am

*[Sen. Tawana Tannock, Chairman]*

## COMMITTEE ON BILL

### CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT ACT 2025

**The Chairman:** Senators, we are now in Committee of the Whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025. I call on Minister Caesar in charge to proceed.

Senator Caesar, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam Chairman, I move that the Senate do now resolve itself into

Committee of the Whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025.

*[Pause and crosstalk]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 . . .

*[Pause]*

**The Chairman:** Senators, it has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?

*[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam Chairman, clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 repeals and replaces the First Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act 1970 by the contents of the Schedule to this Bill. The First Schedule is published on the Bermuda Government Portal at the following web address, [www.gov.bm/schedules-customs-tariff-act-1970](http://www.gov.bm/schedules-customs-tariff-act-1970).

Clause 3 amends the Fifth Schedule to the Customs Tariff Act 1970 by repealing and replacing CPC 4240, (Hospital operating supplies) and by amending CPC 4703 (Goods of tariff code 2710.192 (Diesel)) and CPC 4705, (Goods of tariff code 2710.194 (Fuel oil)).

Clause 4 provides for commencement.

**The Chairman:** Senators, does anyone wish to speak on the clauses?

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Yes, I would. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senator Jones.

**The Chairman:** Madam Chairman, thank you again for allowing me this time to go into Committee to raise to the attention of the Minister . . . there are certain items, as mentioned earlier, that were not included in the tax relief that was from the First Schedule in regard to lighting and material that we would like for the Government to consider. Based on—

**The Chairman:** Sorry, sorry. Senator Jones, I believe we are on the clauses 1 through 4.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Okay. Right. So, repealing and replacing the First Schedule.

I have mentioned an objection to passing those clauses because I would like to bring to the attention of this Chamber items within the Schedule that would . . . I am requesting for a consideration of an amendment.

**POINT OF ORDER**

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Good morning, Madam Chairman. At this point, Madam Chairman, there is a point of order, the Opposition Leader should be clarifying what his proposed amendment is.

**The Chairman:** Senator Jones.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** I would say if the Attorney General would give me a couple of minutes to do that, I am at the process of doing that.

I wanted to point this Chamber to the actual pages of the Schedule that I am, in fact, questioning, and now I have lost my page. Oh, dear.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Madam Chairman, the Opposition Senate Leader is not entitled to question in Committee. He is required to give an amendment. So, does he have a proposal that can be voted on?

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Madam Attorney General.

My understanding from Senator Jones was that he does have an amendment and was taking us to the appropriate part of the Schedule to refer to his amendment.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. His words were that he has *queries*.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** That is true, Madam Chairman, but I have queries that are leading to an amendment. I would like some latitude to allow me to get there if the Government Senate Leader would allow me.

**The Chairman:** So, Senator Jones, we have had the Honourable Minister Caesar move [clauses] 1 through 4. If you have questions specific to clauses 1 through 4, you can ask them. If you do have an amendment that you would like to propose, then that should be put forth and distributed in writing.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** I submit to your guidance, Madam Chairman. I would like the opportunity to ask the question. Understanding at this point, without a written amendment, it cannot be submitted.

Am I allowed to at least ask the question?

**The Chairman:** If it's pertaining to clauses 1 through 4 that are being moved.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Absolutely, Madam Chairman.

As stated earlier, there was a concern made in regard to tariff relief for electricals and plumbing. With that statement made earlier, my question would be, Has the Government considered a reduction in the Schedule that allows further relief for lighting fixtures and plumbing fixtures, and specifically on the electrical material subject—

**POINT OF ORDER**

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam Chairman, point of order. A question was asked and answered previously on this matter, and I've answered that.

**The Chairman:** Senator Jones.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** If my memory serves me correctly, the Minister had asked me if there were any specific items within the Schedule that I would want to bring forward as for consideration.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Point of order, Madam Chair.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** As an answer to that, I'm bringing that to this Chamber.

**The Chairman:** Minister Jones, thank you.

**POINT OF ORDER**

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** I did not indicate that if there were specific items in the Schedule. I said if there were specific items that he had questions around where the reductions were. I basically have answered this question. I did not ask him to go into the specific Schedule. I answered . . . it's an overall. As far as we are concerned, this question has been answered.

**The Chairman:** Senator Jones, do you have a further question?

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** I do reject that premise, but I will yield to the Chair, having left the question to this Chamber that specifics of my question in regard to electrical parts and plumbing that I have offered in this Committee stage were not tabled or considered. But I will yield to you, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Do you have any further questions, Senator Jones?

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** No, I don't. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** Senator Caesar, can you move that the clauses be approved?

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved that clauses 1 through 4 be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?

No objections. The movement of clauses 1 through 4 has been agreed to.

*[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 4 passed.]*

**The Chairman:** Senator Caesar—

*[Crosstalk]*

**The Chairman:** Senator Caesar, I invite you to move the Schedule.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Apologies. Madam Chairman, [I am] asking for clarification. This is a “money bill,” and my understanding is that money bills should not be in Committee.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Caesar. One moment, please.

*[Pause]*

**The Chairman:** Senator Caesar, if you can just bear with us . . . one moment. Thank you.

*[Pause]*

**The Chairman:** Senator Caesar, having read section 39 of the Bermuda Constitution, I am in agreement that this is indeed a money bill, as it deals with the issue of duty. So, we do have restrictions on the powers of the Senate under money bills, which is it does not say that we cannot discuss them in Committee. However, we are not allowed in the Senate to amend a money bill.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

#### POINT OF CLARIFICATION

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, and just as a point of clarification, you have said the rules do not prohibit the discussion in Committee. And my question would be, What would be the point of any further discussion in Committee if there can be no amendment? And further, the question period was provided and ended.

**The Chairman:** Your point is taken, Madam Attorney General. If this Bill . . . your point is taken. However, there is no restriction to go into Committee. What the relevance of that is can be debated, but there is no prohibition from going into Committee under the Constitution, section 38, restriction on powers of the Senate as to other public bills, and then following on from that, [section] 39.

So, there is no restriction to go into Committee. Whether or not it will be a fruitful discussion is up for debate . . . but not debate.

*[Laughter]*

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Madam [Chairman], that being the case, I move that we resolve ourselves

out of Committee and return to the order of business. Thank you.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** May I ask for a point of clarity?

**The Chairman:** Yes, Senator Jones.

#### POINT OF CLARIFICATION

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Madam Chairman, thank you for this ruling. I think that the whole Chamber is clarified on what can or cannot be done.

I just want to raise the point that the purpose in bringing this to Committee was to raise those items that were not brought through and that we felt on this side of the House that with a Government that wants to bring relief to the construction industry, we found it a sort of underperformance when basic items such as electrical and plumbing materials were left off this list of relief.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator.

#### POINT OF ORDER

*[Misleading]*

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Madam Chairman, point of order. It was answered very clearly that categories of electrical material were indeed included and specifically answered, flex pipe as an example.

So, we believe that the [Senate] Leader of the Opposition right now is misleading the Senate.

**The Chairman:** It will seem that we have gone into a debate—

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** —Point of order. Point of order.—

**The Chairman:** It will seem that we have gone into a debate, which at this point is fruitless on this point as we now know what we are confined with this Bill as a money bill and in Committee.

So, I accept that you may have further points to make. However, the Government's position is that, Senator Jones, your question was asked and answered. I understand that it was not answered to your satisfaction and that is where we remain.

As we can no longer have debate in Committee on this particular Bill, I accept Madam Attorney General's recommendation that we move out of Committee.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Madam Chairman, I do have a point of order on the floor that I would like to be considered.

**The Chairman:** What is—

#### POINT OF ORDER

*[Misleading]*

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** My point of order is that I believe the Leader of the Government on the Senate side is misleading the [Senate].

The only reason I raised and went into Committee was I was asked by the Minister of Education, Spokesperson for Finance, if there were actual specific items that I had in mind.

Now, she was able to say that, generally speaking, there were electrical items that were actually part of the tariff relief. But I thought I was invited to bring some other additional electrical material that should have been included. That was my whole point, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Jones.

Senator Caesar has said that you misunderstood her invitation. You were not invited to do that. You were invited to give clarity on specific items.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** The clarity should be sought with the particular relevant agency, not in this particular body at this time.

Thank you for that indulgence, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Senators, we will now dissolve the Committee.

Thank you. Madam President, I invite you— wholeheartedly invite you—

*[Laughter]*

**The Chairman:** —to come and resume your seat.

Senators, thank you very much for bearing with me as we work through this process. I appreciate it.

*[Committee dissolved; No action taken on the Bill entitled Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025.]*

#### Senate resumed at 11:17 am

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

#### PRESIDENT'S PROCEDURAL REVIEW

*[Sections 37–39 of the Bermuda Constitution Order 1968, “money Bill”]*

**The President:** Senators, for clarity, I take full responsibility for the issue that has arisen in that certainly . . . the Constitution with respect to the Senate, we cannot change any money bill. I think that I ruled wrongly in that respect because of the changing of any . . . or any addition to the money bill should not have been allowed. I take full responsibility for that, and we will . . . I thank you all for your indulgence, and I take full responsibility for the error that has occurred.

We will certainly make sure that we go over that . . . because we do not often go into Committee for

sure. The Senate does not often go into Committee, but on money bills, we cannot change or alter them.

We will make sure that we review the guidance on that in the future.

You can continue to pass your Bill.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President. And yes, we are all in this together, so we appreciate your words. Thank you very much.

Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025 be now read a third time.

**The President:** Is there any objection to the third reading?

No objection.

### BILL

### THIRD READING

#### CUSTOMS TARIFF AMENDMENT ACT 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill do now pass.

**The President:** It has been moved that the Bill do now pass.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. The Bill is passed. Thank you, Senators.

*[Motion carried: The Customs Tariff Amendment Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]*

**The President:** And we will resume now with the Orders of the Day and get back to the resolution into Committee for further consideration of the Appropriation Act [2025] together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the financial year 2025/26.

And I call on Senator . . . to move us into Committee.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I move that the Senate do now resolve itself into a Committee of the whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2025 together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister.

And I now call on Senator Tawana Tannock to take the Chair of Committee.

#### Senate in Committee at 11:20 am

*[Sen. Tawana Tannock, Chairman]*

## COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

### APPROPRIATION ACT 2025

#### ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2025/26

**The Chairman:** Senators, we are now in Committee of the Whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26. Head 83, [Ministry of] National Security [Headquarters]; [Bermuda Police Service], Head 7; National [Drug Control] Head 88; Youth and Social Development—I'm sorry.

So that would just be [Heads] 83, 7, and 88. National Security [Headquarters, Head] 83 can be found on page B-264. [Bermuda Police Service], Head 7 can be found on page B-274; National [Drug Control] Head 88 can be found on page B-285. They are now to be debated.

I call on Junior Minister Lindsay Simmons. Senator Simmons, you have the floor.

### MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now take under consideration Head 83, Ministry of National Security Headquarters; Head 7, [Bermuda] Police [Service]; Head 88, National Drug Control.

[Can] we have a time check?

**The Chairman:** Junior Minister Senator Simmons, the time is now 11:22 am. We have two hours to debate your heads. Which means that we will finish . . . we will adjourn for lunch and continue.

So, we have two hours. It is 11:22 am. We will adjourn for lunch. Perhaps I can give a time check at [noon] or 12:15 pm so that we can determine whether or not we would like to adjourn at 12:15 pm or 12:30 pm.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

#### HEAD 83—MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY HEADQUARTERS

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to present the budget for Head 83, the Ministry of National Security [Headquarters] found on pages B-264 through B-267 of the Budget Book.

Mandate or Mission

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the mandate of the Ministry of National Security is *Working together to keep you safe*.

#### Expenditure Overview

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, a total of \$4,966,000 has been allocated for this Head, which represents an increase of \$1,796,000 from the previous year and constitutes 4 per cent of the budget allocated for the Ministry as a whole.

The increase reflects the funding required for various projects and initiatives the department will be implementing, such as the Uniformed Services Training Programme, grants and the educational support programmes. The department will also be filling six posts to provide critical resources in Administration, Cybersecurity and Disaster Risk Reduction and Management. Further details are provided in the business unit cost analysis.

Madam Chairman, on page B-265 of the general summary you will note that there are four business units within the Ministry Headquarters. The estimate for business unit 93000 for Administration is \$2,797,000, an increase of \$795,000 or 40 per cent. This comprises of \$80,037 towards the salary uplift; \$319,931 to cover one Security Manager, and one Information Security Systems Officer and one Cybersecurity Analyst for the Cybersecurity Team; and one secretary for \$61,929; one political aide for \$87,148; and one relief administrative assistant for \$66,059. The remaining amount will form part of the budget towards a stipend for 10 trainees for the Uniformed Services Training Programme of \$92,836. Additionally, \$14,650 for staff and head of department trainings, \$33,000 for overseas conferences and training, \$15,000 for advertising and marketing, and \$24,410 for an increase in Public Radio Safety maintenance fees.

Madam Chairman, business unit 93002 for the Parole Board and 93003 for the Treatment of Offenders Board are no longer being used as both boards have been transferred to the Ministry of Justice.

Madam Chairman, the estimate for business unit 93004 for the Police Complaints Authority is \$31,000 and has no change from the 2024/25 budget.

Madam Chairman, the estimate for business unit 93007 for Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team is \$422,000, a \$232,000, or 122 per cent increase over the 2024/25 financial year. The increase is to fund one National Events Coordinator post for \$86,345, one consultant for \$108,000 to oversee supply chain disaster management and \$37,655 for conferences and tabletop exercises.

Madam Chairman, business unit 93008 relates to the Gang Violence Reduction Programme with an estimate for the financial year 2025/26 of \$1,716,000. This represents \$924,000, or 117 per cent increase over the financial year 2024/25. The increase will fund educational programmes for individuals, counselling for

victims of violence, work placement programmes to provide an alternative to gang activity and grants to fund community programmes in sporting clubs and community-based entities.

#### Revenue Overview

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Liquor Licence Authority was transferred to the Ministry of Justice in September 2024; however, the payment of fees and collection of revenue continued with the Ministry of National Security until 31 March 2025. As shown on page B-266, the adjusted revenue projection for 2024/25 was \$1,012,000, a \$99,000, or 11 per cent increase over the projected revenue collection of \$913,000. As of 31 March 2025, \$997,667 was collected, a \$14,333 decrease over the adjusted revenue projection.

#### Subjective Analysis

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Subjective Analysis of Current Account Estimates of the Ministry of National Security is found on page B-266. I will highlight the material object code descriptions increases and decreases.

Salaries increased by \$705,000. This is attributable to the three posts to be filled to provide administrative services to the Minister and Permanent Secretary, the Cybersecurity Board and the Police Complaints Authority. The Cybersecurity Team will have three more funded team members to bolster the cybersecurity efforts, and the Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team will be fully funded for the National Disaster Coordinator and the National Events Coordinator.

The decrease in wages of [\$279,000] is attributed to the Ministry not having the Uniformed Services Training Programme in progress. The planning and design for this programme are well advanced and we are hoping to launch it during this fiscal year. The funding in the amount of \$371,344 for the cohort for the fiscal year 2025/26 will be allocated to Professional Services.

Professional Services saw an increase of \$1,098,000. Madam Chairman, \$687,664 will be used towards marketing of anti-violence messaging, educational bursaries and counselling services and \$371,344 will be used towards a stipend for two cohorts of 10 people for the Uniform Services Recruitment Programme and \$38,992 for the part-time teachers of the programme.

The increase of \$171,000 for other expenses will be allocated as follows: \$30,000 will be allocated towards the [Mothers on a Mission] MOM Group to provide resources for support services to mothers of victims of gang violence and \$26,590 for safe house, airfare and emergency passports for individuals in [imminent] danger of gang violence. Cybersecurity costs

include \$2,000 for subscriptions, \$8,000 for penetration testing and \$80,000 for centralised logging and monitoring system and \$24,410 towards an increase in public safety radio network fees.

#### Capital Expenditure

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, as shown on page C-14, the Ministry received \$1,140,000 for capital acquisitions. Madam Chairman, \$177,782 will be used towards the upgrades of the Island-wide public safety radio network and \$962,218 will be geared towards the completion of the CCTV network and the start of the Speed Camera system. As I have previously reported to this Honourable [Senate], the installation of the Speed Camera system is contingent upon the complete installation of the CCTV [network].

#### Manpower

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The department's increase of six full-time equivalents reflects the increase in funding of three posts for administrative support, and three posts for the Cybersecurity Unit.

#### Performance Measures by Business Unit

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I am pleased to report the outcomes of the department's forecasted performance measures for fiscal year 2024/25 that were largely achieved. These are found on page B-267.

#### Business Unit 93000, Title Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** This business unit is responsible for providing support to the departments in the form of policy development, project management, financial oversight and cybersecurity governance. One of the key functions of the Cybersecurity Team is to develop and implement policies. During the 2024/25 fiscal period, the team achieved 80 per cent of approving Information Systems Risk Management Programme Policies and are as follows

- Policies for the updated Cybersecurity Act, Cybersecurity Regulations, and Computer Misuse Act were finalised and approved by Cabinet.
- The Cybersecurity Act and Computer Misuse Act based on approved policies were drafted and approved by Parliament.
- The updated Information Systems Risk Management Programme Policy has been developed and is awaiting review by the Cybersecurity Advisory Board and Cabinet Cybersecurity Committee.

The Ministry conducted monthly meetings both in a formal and informal setting with its Heads of Departments (HODs) and DEOD Manager. The formal

meetings were held to provide Heads of Departments with pertinent information that included:

- updates from the Public Service Executive;
- updates on the status of Cabinet Memorandum;
- update DEOD primarily around recruitment and the status of the exercises; and
- financial updates relating to budget, year-end and procurement.

In addition, the department heads provided updates on the major activities taking place in their respective departments. The informal meetings were designed to encourage an exchange of ideas and brainstorming in a relaxed setting on any topic.

#### Business Unit 93007, Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, this business unit is responsible for the oversight of stakeholders' completion of disaster recovery plans. The team is also integral in staging disaster exercises and the coordination of entities during times of disaster such as before, during and after hurricanes.

Between April and September 2024, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team (DRRMT) advanced Bermuda's national disaster preparedness and operational resilience through a range of strategic initiatives, legislative support efforts, stakeholder engagements, and critical operational developments.

A substantial focus was placed on strengthening disaster readiness and emergency management operations. Key activities included the planning, coordination, and execution of the Port Security Tabletop Exercise [TTX] as well as participation in the Government House-hosted Sanctions [TTX]. These exercises were designed to enhance inter-agency coordination, develop operational readiness, and refine information extraction processes through structured scenario debriefs. Preparations and assessments of the Emergency Measures Organisation (EMO) room at the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) remained ongoing to ensure that technical systems, infrastructure, and operational capabilities remained mission-ready.

Madam Chairman, in addition to the exercise and operational readiness work, the DRRMT contributed to the advancement of Bermuda's legislative framework by assisting in the further development of Disaster Management and Emergency Measures Legislation. This supported efforts to modernise Bermuda's legal basis for national disaster response, ensuring that contemporary principles and operational best practices are reflected in statutory frameworks.

The DRRMT also developed a comprehensive business case for the establishment of an all-encompassing Emergency Measures Operations Centre (EMOC). In support of this initiative, the team drafted Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to guide the management, functionality, and activation of an

operations centre. Further, SOPs for the oversight and operation of the Public Safety Radio Network were prepared, ensuring that communications resilience remains a priority across Bermuda's emergency response infrastructure.

Madam Chairman, to strengthen operational readiness across government and community partners, the DRRMT conducted extensive hurricane season preparedness activities. This included engagement with government agencies to verify hurricane response inventories, inspections of hardware store supply chains to confirm capacity under disaster scenarios, and consultations with telecommunications infrastructure managers to identify vulnerabilities and strengthen response plans. The team also worked directly with stakeholders responsible for road clearing and tree cutting operations, ensuring these critical recovery resources were coordinated and prepared.

Weather monitoring activities continued throughout the Atlantic hurricane season, with the team maintaining active situational awareness and providing timely updates to leadership. The team also contributed to the updating and development of key operational documents, including the EMO procedural guides. Shelter readiness assessments were completed in collaboration with key agencies, further reinforcing Bermuda's emergency posture.

Madam Chairman, strategic research initiatives advanced significantly during the reporting period. Notably, the team pursued evaluation of national emergency alerting systems, explored enhancements to Bermuda's public emergency messaging capabilities, and initiated preliminary planning for Bermuda's National Risk Register (NRR). Work focused on disaster preparedness for vulnerable populations, aligning national planning efforts with a commitment to inclusive and equitable disaster risk reduction.

Stakeholder engagement remained a cornerstone of DRRMT operations. The team participated actively in numerous forums, including Port Security Meetings focused on maritime and infrastructure vulnerabilities, Supply Chain Meetings to ensure critical goods continuity during disasters, and Public Health preparedness meetings aimed at strengthening the health sector's resilience to emergencies.

Madam Chairman, furthermore, the DRRMT took responsibility for maintaining Bermuda's Emergency Broadcast [Studio], ensuring that public communication systems were operational and reliable. The team chaired the Public Safety Radio Users Group, providing leadership in coordinating multiple agencies' use of the radio network and addressing critical issues promptly. International engagement continued through FCDO Disaster Manager briefings and UK Met Office hurricane updates, ensuring Bermuda remained closely connected with global resilience efforts.

The DRRMT supported critical incident [response] during the period, particularly following the impacts of Hurricane Ernesto. The team coordinated

stakeholders in the rapid repair and [restoration] of the Public Safety Radio Network, ensuring critical communications infrastructure was brought back online efficiently. Additionally, the team conducted high-level meetings to plan for the potential impacts of a strike by the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA), focusing on continuity of operations and mitigating potential disruptions to Bermuda's import-dependent supply chain.

Madam Chairman, in summary, the Disaster Risk Reduction and Mitigation Team's demonstrated a commitment to national resilience, operational excellence, legislative modernisation, stakeholder collaboration, and international best practice alignment. Through disaster preparedness activities, legislative support, stakeholder engagement, operational support, infrastructure maintenance, and strategic research, the team significantly advanced Bermuda's disaster risk reduction objectives and strengthened its national emergency management framework.

#### Policy Development and Strategic Planning

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** [We] drafted and submitted the National Risk Register (NRR) with Phase 1 training completed in February 2025. A PowerPoint presentation was shared with stakeholders, and the second phase is currently being scheduled. We worked with Policy Analysts to address legislative concerns regarding the authority to declare a disaster, ensuring alignment with the Governor's existing powers.

#### Operational Frameworks and SOPs

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** We developed and submitted EMO Operations Centre Standard Operating Procedures, drafted the Public Safety Radio Standard Operating Procedures in collaboration with BPS and Corrections. We initiated a comprehensive Event Safety Framework and event checklists, including oversight of major national events such as the PGA Golf Tour, Chubb Race Weekend, Cup Match, and Bermuda Day preparations.

#### Community Preparedness and Exercises

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** We coordinated participation in CARIBE WAVE (March 2025) exercise, with a debrief scheduled for April 10. We engaged in planning and evaluating cruise ship tabletop exercises and mass rescue operations in partnership with Marine Operations and UK/US Coast Guard support (though TTX postponed).

We hosted Hurricane Preparedness Planning sessions to address vegetation management, worksite safety, and post-strike coordination across utilities and public works and continued evacuation planning for Ferry Reach, incorporating emergency plans from stakeholders like RUBiS and SOL.

#### Business Unit 93000, Title Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, this business unit is responsible for Gang Violence Reduction Team 2025 Update.

Madam Chairman, in 2025, the Gang Violence Reduction Team (GVRT) continues to stand as a beacon of resilience and transformation, leading Bermuda's fight against gang violence and youth disenfranchisement. In a time where communities face deep-rooted social inequalities, fractured family systems, and barriers to opportunity, the Gang Violence Reduction Team, under the leadership of Bishop Leroy Bean has remained unwavering in its mission, *to intervene, uplift, and empower*.

The Gang Violence Reduction Team is not simply a response mechanism—it is a force of [intentional] change, working to dismantle cycles of violence and rebuild pathways toward hope and healing. Through tailored interventions and robust outreach efforts, the Gang Violence Reduction Team has [embedded] itself in schools, communities, workplaces, and homes, meeting individuals where they are and walking with them toward better futures.

Madam Chairman, the core mission of the Gang Violence Reduction Team remains focused on:

- Guiding individuals away from delinquent peer groups and toxic environments.
- Transforming behaviour patterns of those involved in gang activity and fostering reintegration into society.
- Preventing youth gang involvement by restoring social and familial bonds.
- Opening employment pathways for marginalised youth.
- Connecting individuals with mental and social health resources.
- Strengthening interpersonal relationships and community accountability.

#### School Outreach

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Acknowledging that schools often serve as recruitment grounds for gang activity, the Gang Violence Reduction Team has amplified its school presence across the Island. This year, our outreach included

- Daily High School Lunch Engagements: Regular presence at school lunch hours, offering mentorship and [informal] check-ins.
- Restorative Mediation Sessions: De-escalating tensions and promoting peaceful resolution among students.
- Incident Response and Crisis Management: Post-incident school support, planning, and security assessments.
- Case Management and Tailored Youth Sessions: Individualised support plans and interventions for vulnerable students.

- Small Group Programming: Targeted skill-building and emotional resilience workshops.

Early Intervention: “I AM” & G.R.E.A.T. Programmes

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Early engagement has proven pivotal in changing life trajectories.

The “I Am” Programme highlights:

- Launched in 10 schools, with a new curriculum piloted at Dellwood Middle School.
- Over 116 structured sessions held from September 2023 to June 2024. Eighty-eight sessions were delivered between September 2024 and April 2025.
- One hundred and sixty-two boys across nine primary schools and one middle school participated.
- Thirty-five crisis supports, 36 mediation sessions, and 140 individualised supports delivered.

G.R.E.A.T. Programme

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** G.R.E.A.T. stands for, Madam Chairman, Gang Resistance Education and Training.

- Continues to engage primary school boys with structured, values-based education aimed at fostering resilience and resistance to gang influence.

Work Placement and Mentoring Programme (WPMP)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Bridging school to workforce:

- Fifteen youth participants, with 14 completing the eight-week placement.
- One hundred and thirty job coaching sessions provided personalised support.
- 85 [per cent] business partner satisfaction and interest in future participation.
- Eight youth received extended paid work; four secured jobs post-programme.
- There was no involvement in antisocial or criminal activity throughout the programme.
- 100 per cent of parents observed positive growth in their children.

Redemption Programme: A Path to Personal Reinvention

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** In 2024/25, the Redemption Programme continued as a transformative space for young men:

- Eighteen trainees completed the 25-week programme.

- One hundred and thirty-seven one-on-one case management and job coaching sessions were conducted.
- Seventy-six sessions on career, personal development, and job readiness.
- Six secured employment; one enrolled at Bermuda College; one entered university.
- Ten crisis interventions managed with ongoing support for four active participants.

Street-Level Outreach and Case Management

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Serving 78 young adults (ages 18 to 35):

- Tailored, client-centred case management addressing housing, employment, legal, and mental health needs.
- Safe housing, relocation support, prison visits, and court advocacy have been offered.
- Quarterly community mediations and inter-agency collaborations facilitated [systemic] wraparound care.

Madam Chairman, in the aftermath of violence, when fear grips families and uncertainty ripples through neighbourhoods, it is the Coordinated Crisis Response Team (CCRT) that steps forward to restore peace, stabilise emotions, and help communities begin the process of healing.

Functioning as a rapid-response arm of the Gang Violence Reduction Team, the CCRT is mobilised immediately following serious violent incidents—whether a shooting, stabbing, or other traumatic event. The team is composed of experienced professionals and trusted community figures who work together to deliver compassionate, coordinated support in real-time.

In the past year, the CCRT was [activated] following 28 violent incidents requiring hospital-based intervention, and an additional one community activation in response to heightened tensions on the ground. In total, the team delivered 104 targeted post-incident support sessions to survivors, close friends, and immediate family members impacted by violence.

Gang [Violence] Reduction Team: Leading the National Violence Reduction Strategy

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, today, I am pleased to provide an update on the significant progress made since the launch of Bermuda’s National Violence Reduction Strategy (NVRS)—a strategic framework that marks a bold step forward in addressing violence in our community through prevention, intervention, and rehabilitation.

It is important to note that the Gang [Violence] Reduction Team (GVRT), under the Ministry of National Security, was not only instrumental in developing this strategy but also led its drafting and presentation to Cabinet and the House of Assembly. The NVRS was

officially tabled in the House on 15 November [2024] and passed with full support following a debate on 6 December [2024].

#### Strategic Leadership and Governance Framework

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** To ensure effective implementation, the NVRS is structured across three operational tiers:

1. National Violence Reduction Steering Committee (NVRSC). Chaired by the Minister of National Security and composed of Permanent Secretaries from the Ministries of National Security, Health, Education, Legal Affairs, and Youth, Social Development and Seniors. This committee meets regularly and ensures high-level alignment and resource coordination across ministries.
2. Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement Team (IGET). Focused on intelligence-led enforcement and coordinated interventions, IGET works closely with law enforcement, the courts, and other agencies to mitigate gang activity in real time.
3. Inter-Agency Community Response (IGCR). This prevention-focused tier drives education, youth engagement, and community partnerships to disrupt the root causes of violence.

#### Major Programme Highlights Under the NVRS Educational and Vocational Pathways (Empowering Futures)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Addressing root causes such as economic disenfranchisement, the NVRS has prioritised access to education and job training:

- GED Programme: In partnership with C.A.R.E., grants are being issued to youth pursuing their GEDs. Discussions with the Adult Education School are underway to further expand access.
- Workforce Development: In collaboration with the Ministry of Economy and Labour, apprenticeships and industry certifications are being provided in high-demand sectors.
- Bermuda College Sponsorships: A new initiative is underway to sponsor associate degrees or certifications for youth from underserved backgrounds.

#### New GVRT Staff and Sports-Based Violence Prevention

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** A new GVRT team member has been hired to implement violence reduction strategies within local sports clubs, leveraging [athletics] as a vehicle for positive engagement and gang prevention.

#### Public Messaging and Youth Engagement Stop the Violence Campaign—March 2025

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** In collaboration with 7 South Productions, a multimedia campaign will launch across Bermuda featuring:

- video reels and podcasts;
- student-led campaigns on social media;
- mental health and anti-violence messaging by youth for youth.

We have a plan to recognise that safe spaces are essential for prevention. To that end, the NVRS is also:

- Funding youth-centred organisations such as Transitional Community Services, Future Leaders, The Family Centre, Women’s Resource Centre, and Money Muse to scale their outreach and impact for groups working directly with youth.

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, just a time check. It is now [noon]. Can you indicate whether your preference would be to continue for another 15 minutes or go until 12:30 pm?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** So, I have . . . I could probably finish this and then we could finish this unit and then we could get to lunch.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** No problem.

#### Conclusion

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** In conclusion, Madam Chairman, the National Violence Reduction Strategy represents our Government’s clear and coordinated response to the crisis of violence. The Gang Violence Reduction Team remains at the heart of this mission—not only as the strategy’s author but as its most consistent engine for impact.

With over 80 strategic actions already underway, this work is changing lives and rebuilding communities. Through education, mentorship, crisis response, and real opportunities, the GVRT is leading Bermuda toward a future that is safer, more resilient, and filled with hope.

We extend our deepest appreciation to all stakeholders, ministries, and community partners. Together, we are building a Bermuda where every young person has a reason to be hopeful—and has a path to succeed.

#### Plans for the Upcoming Year

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Ministry of National Security is developing the Uniformed Services Training Programme (USTP) as a strategic

initiative to address long-standing recruitment challenges within Bermuda's uniformed services. The programme is designed to support Bermudians who narrowly fall short of the academic or physical fitness requirements for entry into the services. Open to individuals aged 18 to 49, the USTP will provide targeted training and development aimed at increasing the pool of qualified, service-ready candidates.

Madam Chairman, the programme will be delivered over a three-month period at Warwick Camp and will include a structured combination of academic instruction, physical fitness training, and personal and professional development. Participants will engage in modules focused on numeracy and literacy skills, interview and résumé preparation, and character development, alongside familiarisation placements within the Bermuda Police Service, Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, Customs Department, and the Department of Corrections. The curriculum is currently under development, with input from professional training experts to ensure alignment with the operational and cultural expectations of Bermuda's uniformed services. Participants in the programme will also receive financial compensation during their training period.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry will deliver two cohorts of the programme during the 2025/26 [fiscal] year, with each cohort comprising up to 10 participants. The first cohorts will be populated by individuals who were recently unsuccessful in recruitment processes and narrowly missed the qualifying thresholds. These individuals will be directly invited to apply to the programme. The initial cohort will serve as a pilot, allowing the Ministry to refine delivery based on participant outcomes and operational feedback. The programme also benefits from the support of internal government resources, making it both cost-effective and sustainable.

The Uniformed Services Training Programme represents a significant investment in the future of Bermuda's public safety infrastructure. By focusing on trainable individuals who demonstrate potential but have not yet met entry standards, the programme enhances recruitment outcomes, strengthens organisational resilience, and promotes meaningful opportunities for Bermudians to serve their community with pride and professionalism.

Madam Chairman, as we look at the year ahead, the Gang Violence Reduction Team (GVRT) will remain a central pillar in the ongoing implementation of the National Violence Reduction Strategy (NVRS). As both architects of the strategy and active agents of its delivery, the Gang Violence Reduction Team continues to be a driving force behind Bermuda's efforts to reduce violence and build a safer, more inclusive society.

The Gang Violence Reduction Team's work is not theoretical. It is practical, personal, and profoundly impactful. Through education, mentorship, crisis response, and real-life opportunities, the Gang Violence Reduction Team is changing lives, restoring communities, and guiding young people toward hope and

purpose. Our next steps reflect a commitment to deepening this impact and expanding the reach of our programmes in alignment with the eight strategic goals of the National Violence Reduction Strategy.

Madam Chairman, the Gang Violence Reduction Team will:

- Continue leading and implementing core violence prevention initiatives in direct alignment with the National Violence Reduction Strategy, serving as key stakeholders across all three strategic tiers of the [National Violence Reduction] Strategy (Steering Committee, Inter-Agency Gang Enforcement, and Inter-Agency Community Response [teams]).
- Support community-based prevention and early intervention through:
  - Grants to sports clubs to provide after-school homework assistance, life skills development, and violence prevention workshops for young people.
  - Funding youth-centred organisations that offer trauma-informed, wrap-around support to vulnerable children and families.
  - Expanded counselling services and therapeutic programmes to address mental health needs and support emotional healing for people affected by violence or violent incidents.
- Launch the "Stop the Violence" multimedia campaign in collaboration with 7 South Productions, featuring:
  - Video reels, short films, and podcasts
  - Student-led social media campaigns
  - Messaging that addresses gang violence, emotional health, and youth empowerment
- Host the "Stop the Violence" Youth Conference this June where students from across the Island will be mentored by local creatives to design and present youth-led anti-violence campaigns, while reinforcing peer advocacy and resilience.
- Expand our Youth Mentoring and Work Placement Programme, supporting 25 students with employment readiness, mentorship, and workplace experience in a safe, structured setting.
- Grow the Redemption Programme to support 25 young men through a 20-week curriculum of personal growth, life skills training, conflict resolution, and career exposure.
- Advance educational and vocational pathways under the Empowering Futures initiative, which includes:
  - GED programmes in partnership with C.A.R.E. and discussions to expand offerings through the Adult Education School.

- Apprenticeships and industry certifications through the Ministry of Economy and Labour and other local training programmes and partnerships.
- Associate degrees and certifications through new sponsorships at Bermuda College.
- Support the broader NVRS implementation, including:
  - Violence prevention workshops for community leaders and service providers.
  - Parenting support programmes, including culturally relevant workshops and targeted fatherhood support groups.
  - “Through-the-gate” re-entry support packages for individuals transitioning from incarceration, tied to community-based care models.
  - Community roundtables to gather feedback, build local partnerships, and identify service gaps.
- Uphold the NVRS Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, ensuring every action taken is guided by measurable goals, accountability, and evidence-based practices to deliver meaningful results.

Madam Chairman, the Gang Violence Reduction Team will continue to serve on the frontline—offering guidance, intervention, and opportunity to those who need it most. We remain committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure the effectiveness of the National Violence Reduction Strategy and, most importantly, to build a Bermuda where safety, dignity, and opportunity are not the exception, but the expectation.

Madam Chairman, this ends my presentation on Head 83, Ministry Headquarters.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Simmons, Junior Minister and Senator Simmons.

As discussed, we will now break for lunch, so we will break for lunch at 12:11 pm and reconvene at 1:45 pm.

Are Senators in agreement? Thank you.

**Proceedings in Committee suspended at 12:11 pm**

**Proceedings in Committee resumed at 1:47 pm**

*[Sen. Tawana Tannock, Chairman]*

## COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

### ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2025/26

## MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

*[Continuation thereof]*

**The Chairman:** Good afternoon, Senators, welcome back.

We are now in Committee of the whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26. Heads 7 and 8 of the National Security are now to be debated.

I call on Junior Minister Senator Lindsay Simmons in charge to proceed.

Junior Minister, Senator Simmons, you have the floor.

### HEAD 7—BERMUDA POLICE SERVICE

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

It gives me great pleasure to present Head 7, the Bermuda Police Service, found on pages B-273 through B-276 of the Budget Book.

#### Mission

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the mission of the Bermuda Police Service is, *Making Bermuda safer*. To make Bermuda safer, the Bermuda Police Service strives to

- maintain the confidence of the community;
- treat all persons fairly with dignity and respect;
- protect vulnerable victims;
- reduce crime, particularly focusing on serious crime and gang-related criminality;
- reduce antisocial behaviour; and
- enhance road safety.

Madam Chairman, the Bermuda Police Service (BPS) carries out its objectives by aligning its organisational structure to maintain its community safety agenda and the prevention of criminal risk (locally and internationally) through a funded establishment of 482 employees as shown on page B-276. This represents an increase of nine [police officers], or 2 per cent (full-time equivalents) over the original budget for 2024/25.

Madam Chairman, the Bermuda Police Service continues to advance its 2021–2026 Strategic and Operational Plan. This will allow the following several key initiatives to progress:

- The Bermuda Police Service Gang Targeting Team continues to work with the Ministry of National Security’s Gang Violence Reduction Team to reduce the threat in this area and seeks to divert persons from gang-related criminality. However, significant risk to the community remains from gun/gang-related violence and the Bermuda Police Service continues to strive to deter such acts through effective use of intelligence and specialist policing.

- The Bermuda Police Service continues its work regarding standards of professional behaviour and anti-corruption policy and procedure to which relevant best practice is being utilised by the National Anti-Corruption Committee in support of other government departments and the United Nations Anti-Corruption Self-Assessment for Bermuda.
- The BPS also continues its work in support of the National Anti-Money Laundering Committee (NAMLC) to prevent financial crime, money laundering and counter-terrorism funding, with a strategic focus to maintain its excellent Caribbean Financial Action Task Force (CFATF) grading.
- The BPS further continues its work to prevent and respond to cybersecurity matters and help maintain Bermuda's reputation as a premier international financial jurisdiction.
- The BPS is working to implement a framework for greater multi-agency collaboration on the problem of domestic abuse. We seek to enhance communication and improve training with a view to improving service and reducing victimisation.

#### Expenditure Overview

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I will now invite your attention to the current account estimates for Head 7, which can be found on page B-274.

The total current expenditure for the 2025/26 financial year is estimated to be \$69,769,000. This represents an increase of \$4,931,000, or 8 per cent from the 2024/25 financial year. This change is due primarily to salary increases, resulting from negotiations between the various unions and the Bermuda Government. Salary and wage increases were necessary because of pay freezes, furlough days and not keeping up with CPI [Consumer Price Index] increases over the last 14 years. Proposed salaries of \$54,860,000, which can be found on page B-275 represents an increase of \$4,653,000, or a 9 per cent increase year over year.

#### Programme 0701, Commissioner's Office

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the BPS is focused on the protection of the Island's property and its people. To ensure such protection, we require boots on the ground—that is manpower. Officer salaries represent a primary expense in programme 0701. Total funding for programme 0701 as shown on page B-274 is \$54,592,000. The Commissioner's Office represents 78 per cent of the BPS total budget and covers proposed costs for 410 officers and four civilian staff. Funding for this programme increased by \$4,431,000, or 9 per cent.

The budget also includes funding of \$4 million for police overtime costs and other benefits for officers

as mandated by the Police (Conditions of Service) Orders 2024.

#### Programme [0701], Corporate Services Division

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Corporate Services Division includes the following departments:

- 17010—Human Resources
- 17020—Finance and Administration
- 17025—Information Management Services (IMS)
- 17190—Training and Development Department
- 17300—Vehicle Stores
- 17310—Uniform Stores

Funding for programme 0702 for the 2025/26 financial year is \$6,696,000, an increase of \$191,000, or 3 per cent year over year.

Madam Chairman, the department under the Corporate Services Division that requires the most funding is Information and Management Services (IMS). The total funding of \$2,692,000 represents 40 per cent of the budget for the programme. As the world becomes more reliant on technology, so does policing. And the cost of technology is increasingly pricey as the world veers away from vendor-owned software applications into the world of paying for software licences for periods of time. In addition, computer hardware is deemed obsolete, typically in five years or less, and therefore needs constant replacing. Computer hardware and software are the primary drivers of expenditure in the Information and Management Services department.

Madam Chairman, in keeping with our mission of making Bermuda safer, we cannot do so without [competent] officers safeguarding people and property on the Island of Bermuda. The BPS must constantly recruit as we lose officers through attrition and other reasons. Funding under cost centre 17010, Human Resources, of \$1,254,000 provides support for recruiting and various medical benefits as mandated by the Police (Conditions of Service) Order, or COSO.

Madam Chairman, the 2025/26 budget for finance and administration has been set at \$1,522,000, on page B-274. This is an increase of \$143,000, or 10 per cent. Finance and Maintenance provides \$271,000 for maintenance of the numerous properties of the Bermuda Police Service. Included are the police barracks located in Prospect, Somerset Police Station and Southside Police Station, as well as various offices located at our Prospect site. But the bulk of the budget, \$904,220, covers salaries for 11 full-time equivalents as found on page B-276. Staff under this budget are responsible for BPS payroll, vendor and other payments, stores and facilities. In addition, there is a provision of \$100,000 for the securing of overseas witnesses.

### Programme 0703, Operational Policing Division

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, programme 0703 previously consisted of four separate departments. The departments were merged under one cohesive unit in the 2024/25 financial year under the title Community Policing Unit. Funding for this unit is set at \$2,216,000. This on page B-274. [There is] funding of \$1,005,000 in salaries for the 17 full-time equivalents who support the Bermuda Police Service officers in their policing duties. The unit pays for the cost of station duty officers (SDOs) who whilst civilian, provide critical support for officers.

In addition, the budget funds rent and associated costs of \$264,000 for the Southside Police Station as well as cleaning services and various other costs incurred with running offices for the department.

### Programme 0704, Operational Support Division

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, Operational Support Division provides funding for the following departments:

- 17090—Court Liaison Unit
- 17120—Technical Operations
- 17130—Garage and Workshop
- 17160—Forensic Support

The total budget for this programme is \$3,523,000, an increase of \$218,000, or 7 per cent.

Madam Chairman, while personnel for policing are important so are our operational vehicles which are on Bermuda's roads 24/7. The cost of which is funded under 17130, Garage and Workshop, in the amount of \$1,524,000, an increase of \$176,000, or 13 per cent year over year. The increase is necessary to fund increasing costs for vehicle parts.

Cost centre 17130, Garage and Workshop includes wages and salaries for garage mechanics, and the fleet manager, as well as \$774,000 for inventory, spare parts, fuel, and insurance for the Bermuda Police Service fleet. The budget for garage and workshop represents 43 per cent of the total budget under the Operational Support Division.

### Programme 0708, Serious Crime Divisions

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Serious Crime Divisions includes the following departments:

- 17140—Serious Crime Units
- 17150—Drugs and Financial Crime Department
- 17170—Intelligence Division

The Police Support Unit as shown on page B-274 is now incorporated under programme 0703 which is why there is a zero balance shown for this unit. The budget for programme 0708 is \$2,460,000, an increase of \$36,000, or 1 per cent year over year.

Madam [Chairman], within the Serious Crime Division lies the Serious Crime Unit [SCU] with a budget of \$1,077,000, which represents 44 per cent of the total SCU budget. Prominent in the Serious Crime Unit are costs for overseas consultants at \$683,000. These consultants are a critical part of the BPS, providing skilled and experienced investigators who assist both Intelligence and Financial Crime Units, as well as Forensics Support Officers who deliver essential crime scene response services. These highly skilled professionals are required because they bring capacity, capability and specialised expertise not locally available. Their contribution ensures that BPS maintains operational effectiveness in complex investigations and serious cases while meeting international standards of evidence collection and analysis.

### 0710, Bermuda Reserve Police

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, 0710, Bermuda Reserve Police with a budget of \$282,000. The budget primarily funds bounty payments and associated costs for Bermuda's Reserve Police Officers.

### Revenue Overview

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, revenue shown on page B-275 for the Bermuda Police Service consists of income from

- 8457, general licences;
- 8521, firearms licences;
- 8523, licences for the use of explosives;
- 8525, security guard fees;
- 8617, publications; and
- 8801, facilities.

The BPS is responsible for the provision of fire-arm and explosive licences on Island. In addition, the BPS reviews and approves licences to the various security guard services. The BPS also provides barrack housing facilities at a nominal cost at the Prospect location. With our active recruiting efforts during the last two years the availability of such housing is critical as a benefit and incentive for new officers. In addition, the BPS provides fingerprinting services, police and traffic reports for the public. Because the BPS is not considered (nor should they be) a revenue generator, money earned from these sources are nominal. Therefore, the impact of such revenue is presumed unchanged from the prior year at \$698,000.

### Subjective Analysis

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The Subjective Analysis of current account estimates of [Head] 7 is found on page B-275. I will highlight the material changes year over year.

Madam Chairman, with a projected budget of \$69,769,000, Salaries and Wages represents 79 per cent of the Bermuda Police Service budget. The budget

for salaries is \$54,860,000, an increase of 9 per cent. The budget for wages is \$646,000, an increase of 5 per cent. The funding is for 482 full-time equivalents comprised of 410 officers and 72 civilian staff, as shown on page B-276. The increase for salaries and wages is a result of recently negotiated salary uplifts.

Madam Chairman, repair and maintenance is budgeted at \$2,390,000, an increase of \$101,000. The increase is for additional funding required to repair and maintain various Bermuda Police Service properties throughout the Island. With the ageing buildings and increased repair costs, it was necessary to increase their budget.

Madam Chairman, materials and supplies have increased from \$1,912,000 to \$2,057,000. The increase of \$145,000 is because of increasing costs for vehicle parts and the costs of outsourcing the maintenance of some vehicles, otherwise there were no changes.

#### Capital Expenditure

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Capital development costs. Madam Chairman, as shown on page C-7, the Bermuda Government is funding various capital projects for the Bermuda Police Service in the 2025/26 financial year. Most importantly, the Government has provided \$2,000,000 for renovations to the old headquarters building in Prospect. It is the desire of the BPS to move senior command and the Serious Crime Unit back to its base in Prospect. In so doing, the BPS can eliminate rent and associated costs at the Front Street location, allowing the courts the use of the fifth floor of Hamilton Police Station and bring staff back to their original home. This is an ongoing, massive undertaking and is projected to be finished in August 2026.

#### Capital Acquisition Costs

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the BPS has been provided with \$1,275,000 [for capital acquisitions] as shown on page C-15. Madam Chairman, \$300,000 has been provided to purchase new vehicles. As a 24/7 operation, BPS vehicles endure severe wear and tear and each year some must be replaced for safety reasons. It is anticipated that the BPS will purchase nine new operational vehicles in the 2025/26 financial year.

In addition, the BPS has been funded \$900,000 to replace switches for its network. These switches are well beyond end of life and if not replaced the service risks a complete shutdown of its information systems. As stated earlier, today's police service is technology-driven and information systems are [integral] to our operations. Therefore, the replacement of these switches is critical to BPS operations.

Madam Chairman, the BPS has also been allocated \$30,000 for the acquisition of computer

equipment. And \$45,000 for the replacement of ageing, out-of-warranty, body armour.

#### Staffing

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** As previously mentioned, the BPS has budgeted for 482 officers and staff [as noted on] page B-276, for the 2025/26 for the 2025/26 financial year. This number consists of 410 officers and 72 civilian staff members. This represents an increase of nine additional funded posts when compared to the original submission for the 2024/25 budget.

#### Service Initiatives

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Bermuda Police Service has a strategic and operational plan for the period of 2021 to 2026 with five key priorities:

1. Reducing serious crime
2. Protecting vulnerable persons
3. Raising confidence in the police
4. Reducing harm on our roads
5. Developing digital policing

As we move toward the conclusion of this planning cycle, in 2025, the Bermuda Police Service will begin a comprehensive internal and external consultative process to form our next five-year strategic plan. This forward-looking initiative will gather insights from officers, staff, community members, and partner agencies to shape our priorities and approaches for 2026 to 2031.

A key input to this process will be the findings from the upcoming Security and Defence Review—a Throne Speech initiative that examines what capabilities, capacities, services and resources the BPS needs to best position itself to meet Bermuda's security needs over the next 10 to 15 years. This review will help us align our future strategic planning with broader national security considerations and ensure the BPS is prepared for emerging challenges.

The consultative process will be guided by our commitment to community satisfaction and confidence, ensuring that public input helps shape our future direction. By combining professional expertise with community voice, we aim to develop a strategic plan that builds on our current achievements while adapting to evolving security threats and community expectations.

#### Performance Measures

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I am pleased to report that the department's forecast performance measures, which are shown on page B-277, for fiscal year 2024/25 were achieved.

Public satisfaction with the Bermuda Police Service represents the cornerstone of our performance framework. At 6.2 against our target of 6.0, this measure—independently assessed each quarter through

comprehensive surveys—[transcends] all other measures for a fundamental reason: policing exists only through the consent and support of our community. When citizens express satisfaction with our service, it signals their trust in our approach, their confidence in our abilities, and their willingness to partner with us in *Making Bermuda Safer*.

Traditional metrics like crime statistics, while relevant, only tell part of the story. They measure what we do, not how we do it. A police service can achieve technical objectives yet fail in its primary mission if the public feels unheard, unfairly treated, or unsafe. These independent quarterly measurements capture the people element of policing that no procedural measure can quantify. Simply put, if the community is not satisfied with their service, the BPS is failing, no matter what the other numbers suggest.

#### Policing Issues for 2025/26

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, like many police services globally, the Bermuda Police Service faces ongoing staffing considerations that require careful management. While the current staffing level of 382 officers presents challenges, we are pleased to report that funding is not an issue and that we are making great progress in increasing the number of police officers in the Bermuda Police Service. For example, last year there were 360 officers, which means that we have increased the number of officers by 22, or 6 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the BPS has implemented several promising initiatives to address staffing needs and as is shown in our increased numbers, these efforts are starting to bear fruit. I am pleased to report that the Bermuda Police Service passed out 22 new police officers on 8 May 2025; and there are currently 14 new cadets undergoing training who will be ready for deployment in September. Moreover, we began another recruitment drive in April 2025 and after initial vetting was completed, there are 139 applicants still in the pool. The next recruit foundation course is expected to graduate in March 2026, further bolstering the number of officers in the ranks. Further, Madam Chairman, we are on course to start another recruitment drive in June or July 2025.

Madam Chairman, local recruiting efforts have re-doubled with the assistance of a government-led cross-ministry recruiting initiative that is showing positive results. Additionally, the Government has expanded local recruiting opportunities to include resident non-Bermudians, which will increase numbers and reduce demand [on] barrack accommodations as these candidates are already housed within the community.

Once all local recruitment options have been exhausted, overseas recruitment may become necessary. There is a strong commitment to take whatever steps are needed to ensure the Bermuda Police Service is sufficiently staffed to meet the Island's security needs.

These proactive measures will help address expected retirements over the coming years while ensuring the Bermuda Police Service maintains appropriate staffing levels to fulfil its mandate of *Making Bermuda Safer*.

Madam Chairman, despite these staffing constraints, we face several significant public safety challenges that require targeted action this fiscal year. The scourge of gang and gun violence continues to impact our community with concerning developments. We are now witnessing the first-generation gang member's children coming of age and choosing to carry forward their fathers' destructive legacy, often with greater levels of violence and disregard for community safety. This intergenerational cycle demands renewed intervention strategies focused on at-risk youth to divert them from this path. Knife crime is also rising at an alarming rate and addressing this trend will be a priority for the Bermuda Police Service this year.

Domestic abuse remains a concern requiring sensitive handling. We will continue the work already started in partnership with other agencies to ensure community members feel confident to report these sensitive matters. Our goal is to build more confidence in the police for victims to seek help while providing the specialised response and support when they do come forward.

Madam Chairman, the summer months will bring additional challenges to community safety as residents and visitors socialise in larger numbers on beaches, on the water, and within bars and restaurants. These challenges include increased tensions between rival gangs, antisocial behaviour, and impaired driving. The BPS will maintain an intelligence-led approach to target the most violent and prolific harm-causers.

Additionally, vagrancy and its associated crime continue to impact the look and feel of Bermuda, particularly in the City of Hamilton. Business owners lament lost revenue, intimidation, and concerns about the safety of unaccompanied women. While the roots of this complex social problem extend beyond policing alone, the BPS remains committed to addressing reported crimes while working with our partners to pursue longer-term solutions.

Each of these challenges requires not just enforcement action but community partnership and trust—the foundation upon which effective policing is built. Our independently assessed public satisfaction rating of 6.2 reflects a measure of community confidence in our approaches to these issues, but we recognise there is always room for improvement. We will continue to ensure our responses are visible, effective, and build public trust across all communities, even as we work to address our critical staffing needs.

#### 2024/25 Accomplishments

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I will now provide this Honourable House with some sobering

statistics on what the Bermuda Police Service dealt with over the calendar year (January through December 2024).

Madam Chairman, in *Making Bermuda Safer*, between January and December 2024, the Bermuda Police Service responded to approximately 12,700 events/incidents. Included in that figure, the BPS responded to an average of twenty-five 911 calls every day.

Madam Chairman, there were 1,853 arrests during the period. Notably 201 involved the arrest of an impaired driver, with some drivers being double, treble or even more than four times over the limit (389 was the highest DUI in 2024).

Madam Chairman, 3,719 crimes were recorded and investigated, including nine murders, four of which were committed using a firearm, and five of which were committed using a knife. Of note, there was a knife-related triple homicide.

Madam Chairman, the BPS dealt with 1,461 road traffic collisions of which seven were fatalities and 128 involved serious injury. In the last 10 years, 109 persons have died on our roads and 1,040 have been seriously injured.

Madam Chairman, 6,942 traffic tickets were issued, with 1,718 tickets issued for speed. Of note is that 393 of the speeding tickets were issued for persons driving 70 kilometres per hour, or more than double the speed limit.

Madam Chairman, Stop and Search is a powerful tool that allows police officers to stop, question, and if required, search persons for weapons. The tool is used proportionately, as and when tensions, particularly gang tensions, increase. The Bermuda Police Service issued 1,066 Stop and Search forms to reduce opportunities for violence.

Madam Chairman, despite these challenges, we should remain optimistic about the future of policing in Bermuda. Our women and men work with dedication and integrity every day to serve this community. The trust placed in them—reflected in the independently measured satisfaction rating—is something we value and strive to strengthen with every interaction. We know that public confidence is not just a metric; it is the foundation that enables everything they do. As they move forward with the plans and incentives outlined today, they do so with a firm commitment to transparency, accountability, and genuine partnership with the people of Bermuda. When the community and police stand together, we create not just a safer Bermuda, but a stronger one.

Madam Chairman, that ends my presentation on Head 9 [sic], Bermuda Police Service. I shall now move on to Head 88, Bermuda National Drug Control.

**The Chairman:** Sorry, Senator Simmons, I believe that was Head 7. You said Head 9.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** I apologise if I said Head 9. Head 7.

**The Chairman:** Yes. And just for a time check we are at 2:27 pm and the time to finish this debate will be at three o'clock.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

## HEAD 88—NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to present the budget for Head 88, the Department for National Drug Control, found on pages B-285 through B-289 of the Budget Book.

### Mandate or Mission

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the mandate of the Department for National Drug Control is to, *Lead efforts to reduce the negative impact of drug misuse/abuse on children, families and the community.*

### Expenditure Overview

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Our Expenditure Overview is on page B-285. Madam Chairman, a total of \$5,035,000 has been allocated for this head, which represents an increase of \$981,200 from the previous year, and constitutes 4 per cent of the budget allocated for the Ministry as a whole.

The total current expenditure is estimated to be \$5,035,315 for 2025/26 and represents an increase of \$981,200, or approximately 24 per cent, higher than the budget of 2024/25. This increase is due primarily to increases in salaries, the addition of overtime, increased grant allocations and an increase in the general cost of living for operating costs.

### Subjective Analysis

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The Subjective Analysis of current account estimates of the Department for National Drug Control is found on page B-285. I will highlight the material object code increases and decreases as per business unit.

### Business Unit 98000, Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, Administration is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. Original estimate for 2024/25 is \$901,000. The estimate for 2025/26 is \$1,317,000. The increase is \$416,000, or 46 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the Administration allocation of \$1,317,000 is a 46 per cent increase from the 2024/25 allocation. The increase is due mainly to an increase in grant allocations by \$100,000 and various

increases in operating costs by \$316,000, including the negotiated salary uplifts.

The Administration budget covers employee salaries for two staff and other operational expenses ([such as:] facilities, utilities, maintenance costs, supplies and training). And the following grants of \$100,000 for Salvation Army Harbour Light and Community Life Skills programme; \$[169,000] for Shift (formerly PRIDE); \$330,000 for Focus Counselling Services; and \$150,000 for Pathways Bermuda. Madam Chairman, see page C-21, Grants and Contributions.

#### Business Unit 98010, Community Development

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Community Development is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. Original estimate for 2024/25 is \$229,000. The estimate for 2025/26 is \$233,000, an increase of \$4,000, which is a 2 per cent increase.

Madam Chairman, the allocation to Community Development, business unit 98010, is \$233,000, which is a 2 per cent, or a \$4,000 increase from the 2024/25 allocation. The increase is related to negotiated salary uplifts for one staff.

Funding is allocated to facilitate activities that are primarily targeted towards public education, community development, information dissemination and to support a grant of \$60,000 to the Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (CADA) to support alcohol awareness and to provide TIPS Training. (See page C-21 Grants and Contributions.)

#### Business Unit 98020, Prevention Unit

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Prevention Unit found on page B-285—2023/24 versus 2024/25—I apologise. That should say 2024/25 versus 2025/26. The original estimate for 2024/25 is \$241,000. The estimate for 2025/26 is \$247,000. This is an increase of \$7,000, or 2 per cent.

Madam Chairman, an allocation of \$247,000 is provided to support the Prevention Unit efforts in business unit 98020. This is a \$6,000 increase in the allocation from 2024/25 due to the negotiated salary uplift for one staff.

Funds in this business unit are utilised to improve coverage of drug prevention measures within the community, to improve opportunities for school-based prevention interventions, and to increase access for young people to targeted prevention programmes. Funding is also utilised to support training of Prevention professionals and community members to support drug prevention efforts.

#### Business Unit 98030, Treatment Unit

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The Treatment Unit is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. The original estimate for 2024/25 is \$345,000. The estimate for

2025/26 is \$419,000. This is an increase of \$65,000, which is an 18 per cent increase.

Madam Chairman, the Treatment Unit, business unit 98030, is allocated \$419,000 in fiscal year 2025/26. This is an increase of \$65,000, or 18 per cent. The increase is related to salary uplifts for two staff and an increase in operational costs including promotions, food supplies and rental costs related to professional training and events.

Madam Chairman, the Treatment Unit funding allocation is used to facilitate the implementation of key activities geared towards achieving the goals of the National Treatment Strategy, including Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities [CARF] accreditation fees and resources, addiction specific training; Recovery Month (which is in September) activities; and the AccuCare, web-based client management system licences and training. Funds are also allocated to support the grant for the Bermuda Addiction Certification Board (BACB) at the cost of \$80,000. (See page C-21, Grants and Contributions.)

#### Business Unit 98050, Research and Policy Development Unit

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The Research and Policy Development Unit is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. The original estimate for 2024/25 is \$271,000. The estimate for 2025/26 is \$326,000. This is an increase of \$55,000, which is a 20 per cent increase.

The Research and Policy Development Unit, business unit 98050, has an allocation of \$326,000, which is a 20 per cent, or \$55,000 increase, from the previous fiscal year. The increase is due to negotiated salary uplifts for two staff, funding assigned to support the implementation of required National Surveys, and the evaluation/needs assessments related to the National Drug Control Masterplan.

Madam Chairman, funding in this cost code is used to facilitate information gathering and analysis, monitoring and evaluation, as well as any relevant legislation and policy development initiatives prioritised within the department and/or Ministry.

#### Business Unit 98060, Men's Treatment Programme

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The Men's Treatment Programme is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. The original estimate for 2024/25 is \$911,000. The estimate for 2025/26 is \$1,138,000. This is an increase of \$227,000, or 25 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the Men's Treatment programme, business unit 98060, on page B-285, was allocated \$1,138,000, an increase of \$227,000, or 25 per cent, from the previous fiscal year. The increase is related to salary uplifts for eight clinical staff. Overtime related to operations of a 24-hour programme and

overall cost of living operating costs for food, electricity, et cetera.

Madam Chairman, the funding allocation for Men's Treatment provides the operational and staffing cost required to provide services to meet the treatment/rehabilitative needs and goals of adult males needing residential treatment at the Nelson Bascome Substance Abuse Treatment Facility.

#### Business Unit 98070, Women's Treatment Centre

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The Women's Treatment Centre is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. The original estimate for 2024/25 is \$1,145,000. The estimate for 2025/26 is \$1,355,000. This is an increase of \$208,000, or 18 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the Women's Treatment Centre, business unit 98070, has been allocated \$1,355,000 for the 2025/26 fiscal year. This represents a \$208,000, or 18 per cent, increase from fiscal year 2024/25. This increase relates to salary uplifts for eight clinical staff as well as the salaries for the administrative assistant, residential cook and maintenance person, servicing both the Women's and Men's Programmes.

The increase also includes funding for overtime related to the operation of a 24-hour programme and overall cost of living operating costs for food, electricity, et cetera. The funding allocation provided is utilised to meet the treatment and support needs of women in residential substance abuse treatment along with rent for the Supportive Residence paid by the Department of National Drug Control [DNDC] to the Department of Public Works in the amount of \$60,000 per [annum].

The Women's Treatment Centre provides both residential treatment for women at the Nelson Bascome Substance Abuse Treatment Centre as well as supportive residency at a separate site. The Women's Treatment Centre is the only residential treatment facility for Women in Bermuda.

#### Business Unit 98080, National Drug Control Master Plan

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The National Drug Control Master Plan is found on page B-285—2024/25 versus 2025/26. The original estimate for 2024/25 is zero. The estimate for 2025/26 is zero. There is no change in the dollar amount and no change in the percentage.

Madam Chairman, business unit 98080 is in place to provide for the effective implementation of the National Drug Control Master Plan; cross-ministry initiatives with the Police, Customs and Corrections; evaluation of the Master Plan and to encourage cooperation and involvement of other Government Departments and civil society in the implementation of the Master Plan initiatives. This business unit has not been allocated any funding in financial year 2025/26.

The Department of National Drug Control is required by the National Drug Control Act 2013 to "oversee the implementation of the action plan and monitor and evaluate the performance of the plan." Without funding and high-level support, it is extremely challenging to implement and monitor the action plans and achieve the goals of the National Plan as legislated.

Previous funding in this cost code was utilised to support the development of services identified as gaps and priorities and to provide critical training for the Government Laboratory, Police and Customs staff to enhance their mandates; for example, fentanyl and its handling; the purchase and training of K9 dogs for Corrections and Customs; and attendance of Customs officer to the ACAMS Conference to support NAMLC obligations.

Funding was also previously provided to complete the evaluation and needs assessments for the National Drug Control Master Plan and to support media campaigns to highlight the outcomes of the National Plan. Without this funding the added support to supply and demand reduction agencies is depleted and the development of new initiatives cannot be supported.

#### Capital Expenditure

**Lindsay Simmons:** Capital Expenditure is on page C-15. Madam Chairman, in fiscal year 2024/25, the Department of National Drug Control was provided with \$3,000 to upgrade the security system in the main office. This was completed.

In fiscal year 2025/26, the Department of National Drug Control has been provided with \$10,000 to upgrade the data management system used to support the implementation of national surveys and the Bermuda Drug Information Network (BerDIN) by our Research Unit.

#### Manpower

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the department employs 27 staff. The Department Headquarters is presently staffed by a Director, five Technical Officers and one full-time Administrative staff.

Direct staffing support to the Nelson Bascome Substance Abuse Treatment Facility is provided by one Treatment Coordinator that oversees both the Male and Female Residential Treatment Programmes along with 16 clinical staff (Clinical Coordinators, Addiction Counsellors, Junior Addiction Counsellors and Addiction Counsellor Technicians) and three support staff, (Administrative Assistant, Cook and Maintenance) currently assigned to the Women's Treatment Centre and Men's Treatment Programme.

There are currently three vacancies within the Men's Treatment Programme (Clinical Coordinator, Addiction Counsellor and Addiction Treatment Support Worker). The Addiction Counsellor and Support Worker are in active recruitment; the Clinical Coordinator post

is due to be filled in the 2025/26 fiscal year. There are three vacancies within the Women's Treatment Programme (Addiction Counsellor, Junior Addiction Counsellor and Addiction Treatment Support Worker) due to be filled in the 2025/26 fiscal year; one vacancy in the Head Office (Treatment Coordinator) will be recruited in the 2025/26 fiscal year.

#### Performance Measures by Business Unit

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I am pleased to report that the department's forecast performance measures for fiscal year 2024/25 were achieved in the majority of funded cost codes. Some initiatives were unable to be completed due to staff vacancies. The performance measures for the Department for National Drug Control are listed on pages B-288 and B-289.

#### Business Unit 98000, Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Business unit 98000, Administration, provides the organisational framework in support of the mission and mandate of the Department of National Drug Control. Its resources are aimed primarily at recurrent expenditures, and grants and contributions to the treatment and prevention partners that provide services for, and on behalf of, the department. Madam Chairman, 100 per cent of financial transactions were completed in E1 within Financial Instructions for the year 2024/25, and 100 per cent of performance appraisals were completed for the 2024/25 period.

As a result of supplemental funding in 2024/25, Madam Chairman, six grants were disbursed compared to the five disbursed in 2023/24. The Department for National Drug Control is established, in part as a service delivery unit, but cannot provide all of the needed services required within the community and depends heavily on acquiring services in the treatment and prevention areas through grant allocations to realise its mandate. Shift, (which was formerly PRIDE) CADA, Salvation Army Harbour Light and Community LifeSkills [Training] Programme, Focus Counselling Services, Pathways Bermuda and the Bermuda Addiction Certification Board (BACB) all received grants and provided required services as per their grant agreements during the 2024/25 fiscal year.

Madam Chairman, Shift, formerly known as PRIDE, provides evidenced-based life skills programming within five of the public primary schools to support drug education and drug prevention activities. In 2024/25, Shift received \$119,000. This level of funding created major challenges with their ability to retain staff and facilitate their programming in the schools. Shift will be granted \$169,000 for fiscal year [2025/26], a 42 per cent increase from fiscal year 2024/25 with the goal of increasing their reach for programming in more schools and restoring programme facilitator levels.

The Salvation Army received \$50,000 for the Harbour Light and life skills programmes in fiscal year 2024/25. This funding level challenged their ability to hire needed staff and their ability to provide their programmes effectively. Harbour Light and the life skills [programmes] will receive a grant in the amount of \$100,000 in fiscal year 2025/26, a 100 per cent increase, to continue to provide residential drug treatment and community life skills programming for 10 males and hire needed staff.

Madam Chairman, Focus Counselling Service provides transitional/supportive housing for up to 28 recovering males. These individual adult males have participated in primary drug treatment at other treatment facilities (such as the prison, hospital, inpatient or outpatient services) and require assistance in re-integrating back into the community. The goal is to return participants back to the community as productive citizens, thus improving the number of individuals maintaining a drug free lifestyle. Focus Counselling Services received \$180,000 initially in fiscal year 2024/25. An additional \$150,000 was awarded as a supplemental bringing their grant to \$330,000. Focus Counselling Services will receive the same level grant of \$330,000 in fiscal year 2025/26.

Pathways Bermuda provides outpatient substance abuse treatment and aftercare services within the community, servicing approximately 81 individuals. Pathways received \$150,000 as part of the supplemental funds awarded in fiscal year 2024/25 and will receive a grant of the same level, \$150,000 in fiscal year 2025/26 to enhance their services and hiring of a Clinical Supervisor.

Madam Chairman, CADA works in collaboration with the Department for National Drug Control to provide community education on alcohol misuse, as well as to provide the server training programme (TIPS) which is mandated within the Liquor Licence Act 1974, as amended in 2011. A grant of \$60,000 was provided to CADA in fiscal year 2024/25, which mainly supports the implementation of the TIPS programme.

CADA will receive the same level funding of \$60,000 in fiscal year 2025/26 to support these activities. Grant funding of \$80,000 was provided to the Bermuda Addiction Certification Board (BACB) in fiscal year 2024/25. The Bermuda Addiction Certification Board provides international certification testing for both prevention and treatment professionals locally; funding also supports addiction-specific training to enhance workforce development in this [specialty] area on the Island; supports re-certification of professionals and helps to maintain membership in the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC). Certification is required for registration of Addiction Counsellors to practice under the Allied Health Professions Act 1973. There are currently 56 certified and registered Addiction Counsellors (an increase of seven from the previous year); 12 of the Addiction Counsellors are also certified Clinical Supervisors, (an increase of one

from the previous year) and there are two Prevention Specialists, which is a total of 58 certified addiction professionals working in Bermuda. There are also five Associate Alcohol and Drug Counsellors holding that [designation] under the board. BACB will receive the same level grant of \$80,000 for fiscal year 2025/26 to continue their work.

The highlighted agencies have provided an integral part of the drug prevention and drug treatment continuum of services for Bermuda for many decades in collaboration with the Department for National Drug Control. (See page C-21 Grants and Contributions.)

#### Business Unit 98010, Community Development

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the goal of this unit is to educate the public about the harms of alcohol and drug use, to ensure the provision of clear and sustained messages to our young people that *no use of alcohol, cannabis, tobacco or other drugs is acceptable*. And to involve families, schools and community organisations in alcohol/drug prevention efforts.

Other initiatives for the Community Development unit are to assist in highlighting drunk/drug driving and road safety initiatives through public education and to continue awareness campaigns directed at underage drinking, adolescent drug use (which is alcohol and cannabis) and emerging drugs, such as fentanyl and synthetic drugs, edibles and vaping.

Throughout the 2024/25 fiscal year, the Department of National Drug Control Prevention Team collaborated with the Department of Education to bring awareness and education on the harms of vaping to both high schools and middle schools in the public and private sectors through web-based presentations and training with overseas specialists. A total of five training events for students and teachers were held. Two multimedia campaigns were focused on vaping and cannabis with ads occurring on radio, television and on the Internet targeting the adolescent population.

Grassroots activities included work with the Court Street Market Community group festival, participation in health booths at [both] senior schools and the City of Hamilton.

#### Business Unit 98020, Prevention

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Prevention Unit is responsible for providing drug prevention programmes for schools and the wider community with the goal of stopping use before it starts.

The Prevention Unit facilitates the implementation and integration of the AI's Pals programme at the pre-school level at all public schools and one private school. AI's Pals is an early childhood curriculum and teacher programme that promotes resiliency at the early childhood stage with explicit instruction to develop social competence, autonomy and problem solving. The DNDC supports the AI's Pals programme within

schools by funding initial teacher training, refresher courses and by providing resources/supplies for all educators implementing the programme at a cost of approximately \$15,000 per year. Approximately 296 students have participated in the programme from the pre-school level in the public schools, an 8 per cent increase from last year and 48 in the private schools (a total of 344 students). Currently there are 42 teachers trained and providing the AI's Pals programme.

Madam Chairman, the unit also provides the Teen Peace programme that supports three public schools for P7 and M1 school-age children as an after-school programme. Currently there are 50 students participating in the Teen Peace programmes, a decrease of 15 from the previous fiscal year due to the closing of one middle school. The programme allows students to be interactive with positive, prosocial adults and affords them the opportunity to further develop, operationalise and practice social-emotional learning skills at a vital stage when children are transitioning developmentally, cognitively and emotionally.

The DNDC hires and trains facilitators for this programme as well as provides all supplies and resources. Teachers facilitating have received the Botvin's LifeSkills training, which a research-validated substance abuse prevention programme proven to reduce the risks of alcohol, tobacco, drug abuse, and violence. The programme targets the major social and psychological factors that promote the initiation of substance use and other risky antisocial behaviours. There are six trained facilitators—

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, Junior Minister Simmons, I am afraid our time is up for the debate of these heads, Heads 83, 7 and 88.

It was heartening to hear about the progress being made in substance abuse prevention and the work of the Bermuda Police Service. Unfortunately, the Opposition will not have an opportunity to ask questions on these heads.

Would you like to ask to move these heads?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move that Heads 83, 7, and 88 be approved as printed.

**The Chairman:** Are there any objections to that motion?

**An Hon. Senator:** None at all.

**The Chairman:** There are no objections. It has been agreed to.

*[Motion carried: The Ministry of National Security, Heads, 83, 7, and 88 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26.]*

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, Junior Minister, I believe that it is you again.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Chairman:** All right. So that will be the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, Heads 86, 23, and 55. We have two hours that debate.

Senator Simmons, do you need to take a minute?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

**The Chairman:** All right. So we will note that the time is 3:02 pm. Thank you.

## MINISTRY OF YOUTH, SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SENIORS

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now take under consideration Head 86, Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors Headquarters; Head 23, Child and Family Services; and Head 55, Financial Assistance.

Madam Chairman, I am pleased to present the 2025/26 budget estimates for the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors which comprises the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors Headquarters, inclusive of Ageing and Disability Services, the K. Margaret Carter Centre, the Office of Youth Affairs; the Department of Child and Family Services and, the Department of Financial Assistance.

Madam Chairman, the 2025/26 budget allocations for the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors will demonstrate that the services and programmes offered by the Ministry will directly impact and improve the overall well-being and quality of life.

The Ministry was focused on [numerous] national priorities during the last budget year, which are ongoing and will continue in the upcoming 2025/26 budget year. Some of these include:

- Work done to support the implementation of the five-year National Plan for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families 2023-2028.
- A work plan developed by the Gender Affairs Council that includes reviewing CARICOM Regional Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) Tool and making recommendations to the KAP Tool will be adapted for Bermuda.
- Strengthening the Litigation Guardian Framework as the Ministry officially established the Office of the Litigation Guardian.
- Observations of the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls and the launch of the 16 Days of Activism.

- The continued joint partnership with the UN Women and UNDP participating in the Joint Sustainable Development Go-Fund Programme entitled: *Building Back Equal through Innovative Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment*.
- In partnership with UN Women, the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation [BEDC] and the Ministry to host virtual training sessions on Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) 101 and the Gender Gap Analysis Tool for Business Growth in Bermuda.
- Collaboration with BEDC, UNDP, and UN Women and the Founder Institute the world's largest pre-seed startup accelerator advanced the initiative, *Rise and Scale: Bermuda Business Accelerator*. [The initiative] aimed to foster an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem in Bermuda through a five-week intensive accelerator programme for persons with disabilities, women, and youth entrepreneurs.
- Continue work that supported Bermuda becoming the first British Overseas Territory to have the United Kingdom extend the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This extension safeguards the rights, dignity and full participation of more than 3,000 persons living with disabilities in Bermuda. Madam Chairman, the summary of the fiscal year 2025/26 current account budget estimate for the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors is found on page B-290. The Ministry's total budget estimate [for the fiscal year 2025/26 is] \$91,274,000. This represents an increase of \$5,979,000 or 7 per cent compared to the original estimate of \$85,295,000 for fiscal year 2024/25. Madam Chairman, this summary shows that the 2025/26 current expenditure allocations for all heads within the Ministry have increased. I will explain the details of these increases further in this budget presentation.

### HEAD 86—MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the current account expenditure for Head 86, Ministry Headquarters, can be found on pages B-290 to B-293.

The Ministry Headquarters is responsible for the budget of 10 business units

- 96000—Administration;
- 96040—Ageing and Disability Services;
- 96050—K. Margaret Carter Centre;
- 96060—Policy Development;
- 96070—Grants to the Third Sector;
- 96080—Youth Office;
- 96090—Youth Grants and Investments;
- 96100—Youth Community Centres;

- 96110—Before, After, and Out of School Programmes; and
- 96120—Youth Policy.

Madam Chairman, the mission of the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors Headquarters found on page B-291 is the *protection of all individuals during their lifetime and facilitation of well-being*. The five objectives of the Ministry Headquarters are also found on page B-291.

Madam Chairman, the General Summary of the Ministry's budget on page B-291 shows that the total budget allocation for the Ministry Headquarters for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$14,111,000, distributed amongst the 10 business units representing a net increase of \$2,617,000.

I will now share details of each of these business units, commencing with business unit 96000, Administration.

#### Business Unit 96000—Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the 2025/26 budget for the Administration business unit 96000 of \$1,625,000 compares to the \$1,352,000 originally budgeted in fiscal year 2024/25. This reflects an increase of \$273,000, or a 20 per cent increase, as shown on page B-291, which primarily accounts for salary uplifts to substantive staff resulting from union negotiation agreements and increase in rental fees and the cost of materials and supplies.

#### Business Unit 96040—Ageing and Disability Services

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I now present the budget for business unit 96040, Ageing and Disability Services (or ADS), which can be found on page B-291.

Madam Chairman, ADS has been allocated a budget of \$1,902,000, for fiscal year 2025/26. This allocation is 43 per cent or \$570,000 more than the budget allocation in fiscal year 2024/25. This increase includes the mid-year supplementary funding of \$120,000.

#### Policy and Program Development

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, Ageing and Disability Services (ADS) continues to lead the planning and coordination of policies and programmes for the protection of seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry fulfilled its 2021 Throne Speech commitment with the launch of the National Disability Register mobile app on April 24, 2024.

The National Disability Register is a pivotal step and underscores the Government's commitment to persons with disabilities by upholding the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and achieving

the UN Sustainable Development Goal, SDG 10, Reduce Inequalities.

Madam Chairman, another significant achievement was the completion of the National Seniors Strategy 2024-2030, a first for Bermuda and fulfilling the Government's 2020 Throne Speech commitment.

Several national policy and programming initiatives outlined in the National Seniors Strategy [NSS] has already been initiated that include:

- The establishment of a long-term care working group.
- Amendments to the Senior Abuse Register Act 2008.
- Development of an integrated care pathway for Dementia.
- Collaboration with the Ministry of Justice on the development of an Office of the Public Guardian.
- The development of a Senior Day Care Facility:

On page C-8, Capital Development, a total of \$1.5 million has been allocated this fiscal year to hire an architectural firm and start the building designs for this project. A project manager has already been identified and engaged.

The Ministry is actively collaborating with the Ministry of Public Works to advance the project.

#### Education and Awareness

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, During the last fiscal year, ADS held 19 education and awareness events, well exceeding its projected number. This includes the second annual Seniors Tea held in June 2024, which successfully hosted over 100 seniors.

Other community awareness activities during the past year included:

- Domestic Violence Day Proclamation and awareness event that ADS participated in as a member of MARAC [Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference].
- Presentations to organisations on abuse prevention and abuse prevention tips to seniors' clubs.

#### Case Management

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, case management represents the primary programme under ADS business unit 96040. Case management clients include seniors and persons over 18 years old with long-standing disabling conditions and are divided into general case management and adult protection services.

Madam Chairman, in 2024/25 ADS had a total of 389 cases, an 18 per cent [increase] from the previous year. Of these cases, 228 were general case management cases, including 26 [cases] of persons under

65 years of age, of which 8 included abuse allegations. The remainder of the total cases were senior abuse referrals totalling 161 reports received. The reports identified were categorised as:

- 35 per cent for physical abuse
  - 28 per cent for financial exploitation
  - 23 per cent for psychological abuse
  - 11 per cent for neglect and
  - 3 per cent for sexual abuse
- Of these reports received, to date:
- 24 [per cent] were substantiated
  - 54 [per cent] were unsubstantiated
  - 22 [per cent] are pending, as they are still under investigation

Madam Chairman, the number of reports and cases managed by this office is increasing each year due to an ageing population and increased awareness of the ADS services.

Madam Chairman, as result of the Ministry's commitment to dementia support services, a dementia pilot programme, managed by ADS, commenced in October 2023 with funding extended in six-month increments up to June 2025. A total of \$96,000 was allocated to the dementia services pilot programme. [The funds] contributed to the provision of dementia needs assessments and case management services to 111 persons in the community.

Business Unit 96050  
K. Margaret Carter Centre (KMCC)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the K. Margaret Carter Centre (KMCC) provides direct support for adults with intellectual disabilities in the community through comprehensive day programme services and case management.

For the fiscal year 2025/26, on page B-291, the K. Margaret Carter Centre has a budget allocation of \$2,343,000.

Madam Chairman, during 2024/25, KMCC continued to provide programmes, five days per week, to service users across six client groups with programme and staff development efforts taking place in the following areas:

- The continuation of a once weekly hot lunch programme that promotes client involvement in the preparation of meals.
- Regular bake sales promoting culinary and vocational skills development amongst participating clients.
- Participation in key events such as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) 2024 proclamation, "A Motown Christmas Musical" put on by the clients with staff support, and the annual Mates & Dates Valentines Dance hosted in collaboration with the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute's Community

Intellectual Disabilities Team (CIDT) and Carter House Charity.

Madam Chairman, it is important to note that in the last fiscal year the K. Margaret Carter Centre experienced specific programme enhancements, which included:

- Restructuring the programme format to establish seven distinct core programmes.
- Development of a Safeguarding Policy and a Behaviour Support Policy, to better align KMCC practices with international standards.
- Establishment of formalised entry and exit criteria to assess the needs of potential clients.
- Engagement in staff professional development focused on psychological safety in the workplace.
- Facilitation of a comprehensive programme design consultation process involving staff, parents/guardians, and clients.

Madam Chairman, the K. Margaret Carter Centre received a mid-year supplementary funding of \$668,930, which has played a [critical] role in enhancing its service delivery and supporting ongoing development efforts. This funding has directly enabled:

- Hiring an additional case manager and paraprofessional to improve staff-to-client ratios along with a nurse and behavioural therapist.
- Expanding the day care hours at KMCC from 3:00 pm to 5:45 pm for those parents and guardians who work until 5:00 pm.
- Renovations of the former woodwork room to create an appropriate space for a specialised day programme.

On page C-8, Capital Development, \$45,000 has been budgeted for this upcoming year to cover the [requisite] renovations.

Madam Chairman, I will move on to business unit 96060, Policy Development (page B-291).

Business Unit 96060  
Policy Development (page B-291)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** For fiscal 2025/26, Madam Chairman, \$157,000 was allocated for policy development. This is an increase of \$2,000, reflecting a salary uplift for the one full-time equivalent as shown on page B-293. This policy resource supports the Ministry's policy commitments, which include Throne Speech and the Government's platform initiatives.

Madam Chairman, \$3,695,000 has been allocated for the fiscal year 2025/26 for business unit 96070, Grants to the Third Sector, as shown on page B-291. This is an increase of \$590,000, or 19 per cent, reflecting the inclusion of grant funding for The Teen Services and The Teen Haven, which have shifted from the Department of Child and Family Services to the Ministry Headquarters.

## Youth Affairs

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I will now present the fiscal year 2025/26 estimates of expenditure and revenue for the Office of Youth Affairs, which can be found on pages B-291 to B-292 of the Estimates Book.

Madam Chairman, as shown on page B-291, the total 2025/26 budget allocation for all four programmes Youth Development, Youth Outreach, Youth Services and Youth Policy, is \$4,389,000, an increase of \$729,000, or 20 per cent.

## Programme 8602, Youth Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the allocated budget for fiscal year 2025/26 for programme 8602, Youth Administration (shown as Youth Development) is \$691,000. This reflects an increase of \$75,000, or 12 per cent, as shown on page B-291.

Madam Chairman, within this youth development programme, \$556,000 will cover business unit 96080. This allocation is \$40,000 higher, or 8 per cent more than in 2024/25, and provides for salaries, training, recreational services, supplies and other funds to ensure the operations of the Youth Office, now [relocated] to Verita's Place, 65 Court Street, Hamilton.

Madam Chairman, the allocated budget for business unit 96090, Grants and Investments, is \$135,000. This is an increase of \$35,000, or 35 per cent, compared to 2024/25.

## Programme 8603, Youth Outreach

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget allocation for business unit 96100, Youth Community Centres is \$1,713,000, an increase of \$135,000, or 9 per cent compared to 2024/25. These monies will cover the cost of operations for the three community centres located at the Eastern Zone Community Centre in St. George's, the Sammy Wilson Central Zone Community Centre in Hamilton, and the Western Zone Community Centre in Sandys.

The increase in funding of \$135,000 is attributed to expanded hours of work for the community workers to support parents and guardians who work shift hours and need to have their children in a safe environment.

Madam Chairman, the Youth Community Centres have 20 full-time equivalents (FTEs) for fiscal year 2025/26, shown on page B-293. These workers facilitate a variety of community enrichment programmes for seniors, adults, youth, and children providing engaging activities for the whole family that promotes the section's aim in empowering youth, families, and our communities.

## Programme 8604, Youth Services

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, business unit 96110, Before/After/Out of School Programmes has been allocated \$1,802,000, shown on page B-291. This is an increase of 23 per cent, or \$336,000 in comparison to fiscal year 2024/25. This increase reflects adjustments made to salaries, communications, materials and supplies for 15 youth programmes.

Madam Chairman, during 2024/25, Youth Services supported approximately 550 preschool, primary and middle school-aged participants in the after school programme and 1,650 preschool, primary and middle school participants in the out of school programmes across the Island.

There are a total of 28 full-time equivalents committed to these programmes, an increase of 8 per cent compared to 2024/25, shown on page B-293. Just over 60 seasonal workers are employed with Youth Services and just under half are local college students.

## Programme 8605, Youth Development

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** For fiscal year 2025/26, Madam Chairman, \$183,000 has been allocated to business unit 96120, Youth Policy, shown on page B-291. The budget is designated for salaries, workshop facilitation, conference materials and supplies.

This programme is responsible for the coordination of the National Youth Policy and the execution of the activities to progress the policy. There is one full-time equivalent, as shown on page B-293 responsible for providing technical advice and support to the working group for advancing the National Youth Policy priorities.

## Performance Measures

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the performance measures for the Office of Youth Affairs [TOYA] can be found on pages B-295 to B-296 of which all target outcomes were met during 2024/25.

Madam Chairman, business unit 96090 funded 15 grants to youth organisations and groups in 2024/25. These organisations have invested countless hours into the development of Bermuda's youth.

During 2025/26, TOYA [the Office of Youth Affairs] will continue to support organisations that are committed to making impactful change to empower Bermuda's youth. Additionally, Madam Chairman, during 2024/25, two youth investments aligned with National Youth Policy Goal 5.3, were given as a short-term sponsorship to young people who wish to pursue their recreational passions in areas including the arts, [oration], culinary arts, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The first two recipients to receive this sponsorship were:

- Carter Murray, an eight-year-old prodigy student at the Bermuda Institute who showed proficiency in math and represented Bermuda in

the All-USA Calculation Contest. He was the only international student to participate.

- Christian Warren, a seventeen-year-old who is determined to become Bermuda's youngest commercially licensed pilot to fly at 25 years old. He completed flight school training last summer; these hours will go toward his Commercial Pilot Licence.

Madam Chairman, the performance measures of the Office of Youth Affairs, shown on pages B-295 and B-296, provide evidence of a productive year.

#### Other Youth Initiatives

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, during the past year there were opportunities created to engage young people and show appreciation for those who work with them.

The first-ever Middle School Mash Up was held April 18, 2024, where eligible students participated in a day of Xtreme Sports to develop and enhance team building skills.

- From April 22 through 26, 2024, the team acknowledged staff during the after school programme Professional Week with activities that gave clients and the public opportunities to express their appreciation.
- The National 18+ Youth Conference and activities were held from July 15 to 21, 2024. Intentionally unconventional, this allowed for interaction with young people across the Island.
- On August 12, 2024, International Youth Day was observed with a proclamation to declare the Government's commitment to youth by establishing the entity Youth Affairs.
- An Anti-Bullying Week campaign culminated on the steps of City Hall from November [11] through 15, 2024, with testimonies to bring awareness to eradicate the antisocial behaviours associated with bullying.
- The National Mini Youth Conference "Big Up Yaself" and your mental health was held on January 30 and 31 2025, at the Botanical Gardens. This two-day event yielded the presence of over 200 students participating in workshops and mindfulness activities.
- A Neurodiversity Week Awareness Campaign held March 17 through 21, 2025, was a soft launch to the expansion of services within the Before, After and Out of School Programme.

Madam Chairman, this concludes the presentation on the fiscal year 2025/26 budgetary allocation for Head 86, Section: The Office of Youth Affairs.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Simmons.

Do any Senators wish to speak to those heads?

Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I am going to cover Head 86, Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors HQ, page [B]-291 and business unit 96040 under Ageing and Disability Services.

Madam Chairman, as I look through the Ministry's budget for Youth, Social Development and Seniors I have to say it reads a little like business as usual; however, I do acknowledge the continuation of important efforts like the dementia care pilot programme and the planned senior day care facility at Gilbert Institute. These are good initiatives. But given the ageing population and the very real needs of our seniors, I was hoping to see more urgency and forward-planning. So, I do have a few questions around how these initiatives are being prioritised, measured and scaled because while the intent is there, I think we need to be a bit more clear on where all this is going.

So, if the . . . let me go over the first question that I have. It has been stated that the Ministry has allocated \$150,000 to continue the dementia care pilot programme, which has supported (I updated my numbers based on what the Junior Minister has stated) 111 seniors since October 2023. So, my question is, Can the Junior Minister let us know, What is the long-term vision of this pilot programme and how will outcomes be used to justify a full-scale implementation? That is my first question.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

Senator Simmons, did you hear that question or would you like for it to be repeated? And I must add that Senator Simmons has indicated that she was not finished covering that head and has a little bit more to go. So—

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** I apologise.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Yes, that was just for that section.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Oh!

*[Laughter]*

**The Chairman:** Oh, all right.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** I was happy.

*[Laughter]*

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** I apologise.

**The Chairman:** So, Senator Foley, that was a long question. If you remember it, could you ask it again? Thank you.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** I apologise.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** No problem.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** The question was—

**The Chairman:** No. Could you perhaps hold it until Senator Simmons has finished?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Absolutely. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you. I apologise.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you. Sorry. That was just for that section.

So, Madam Chairman—

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

### SENATE VISITOR

**The Chairman:** Pardon me. It was remiss . . . I should note that the Minister [Tinee] Furbert, of Youth, Social Development and Seniors is in the Chamber. Thank you, Minister Furbert.

*[Committee of Supply, continuing]*

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

Madam Chairman, the breakdown of the Ministry's grants can be seen on page C-21 of the Estimate Book.

In the fiscal year 2025/26, the Ministry's following charities and organisations will receive a grant from the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors to provide our community with the resources and social services needed to support our vulnerable population groups:

- Grants to External Bodies has been allocated \$220,000.
- Youth Organisations, \$130,000.
- Age Concern, \$25,000.
- Matilda Smith Williams and Lorraine's Nursing Home, \$1,170,000.
- Women's Resource Centre, \$75,000.
- Centre Against Abuse, \$150,000.
- Care of the Blind, \$30,000.
- Meals on Wheels, \$50,000 through the lunch service of Meals on Wheels.
- Salvation Army, \$550,000.
- The Summerhaven facility, \$600,000.
- The Packwood Nursing Home, \$350,000.
- HOME, \$70,000.
- Tomorrow's Voices \$30,000.

Subjective Analysis of Current Account Estimates

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I will now present the combined subjective analysis of current account estimates for the Ministry Headquarters as found on page B-292 of the Estimates Book.

### Salaries

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget allocated for salaries is \$4,880,000, in the fiscal year 2025/26, an increase of \$651,000. This salary allocation covers the Ministry's 87 full-time equivalents, found on page B-293. The salary growth reflects increases in staff due to new social sector programmes, additional employee costs as a result of expanded hours of the day care programme at the K. Margaret Carter Centre and additional funding for negotiated salary uplifts for 2025/26.

### Wages

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the increase in the budget allocation for wages of \$392,000 supports a cost-of-living increase for non-unionised youth programme coordinators, programme supervisors, and programme [workers], community workers, as well as additional funding for two supervisors, all of whom are employed within the Office of Youth Affairs. As well, extra funding has been appropriated for wage uplifts for unionised industrial employees.

### Training

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, \$56,000 has been allocated to facilitate professional training for employees during fiscal year 2025/26, representing an increase of \$43,000. This increase is due to Ageing and Disability Services funding a four-day joint safety training course to include other government departments in the forensic interviewing of older persons.

### Transport and Travel

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the \$3,000 budgeted for transport for fiscal year 2025/26 is on par with the prior year. The increase of \$12,000 for travel is budgeted to cover overseas travel for conferences and technical meetings.

### Communications

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, communications, inclusive of phones, courier and postal costs, is budgeted at \$128,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, indicating an increase of \$7,000. The increase reflects new expenses for telephone rentals and cell phones for the Youth Policy section, as well as modest increases by the Ministry HQ and the Youth Office.

### Advertising and Promotion

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, advertising and promotion costs increased by \$39,000. This increase is attributed to various planned marketing campaigns [by Ageing and Disability Services] on financial abuse and scams committed against vulnerable persons; and by the Office of Youth Affairs to promote year-round recreational and social experiences within the Community [Centres].

#### Professional Services

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, professional services of \$1,658,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, increased by \$515,000. This increased level of funding reflects the allocation of monies to fill a social sector gap and provide specialist domestic abuse [perpetrator] treatment services.

Monies are also included to advance planning and implementation of the National Seniors and Long-Term Care Strategy by the Ministry and also funding for case management coverage and welfare guardian support needed by Ageing and Disability Services.

#### Rentals

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, \$235,000 was budgeted for rentals, an increase of \$1,000. This increase represents a reduction in equipment rentals, offset by an increase in rented facilities to host workshops and conferences by the new Youth Policy section [and] the Youth Office.

#### Repair and Maintenance

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, in fiscal year 2025/26, repair and maintenance has been allocated \$209,000, or \$41,000 more than the budget allocation for fiscal year 2024/25. This increase in funding covers the cost of a variety of repair and maintenance expenses anticipated by the Community Centres including but not limited to industrial cleaning of floors, minor interior building repairs, pest control, and equipment maintenance. Also, increased funds have been allocated to maintain an ageing bus operated by the K. Margaret Carter Centre.

#### Insurance

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, \$72,000 is budgeted for insurance costs for fiscal year 2025/26. The reduction [in costs] of \$42,000 is representative of a decline in the number of clients at the K. Margaret Carter Centre who require HIP health insurance coverage.

#### Energy

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, energy costs increased by \$27,000 to \$181,000. This increase

will cover the costs of electricity for the Youth Office which recently moved from a shared rental space to its own office.

#### Clothing, Uniforms and Laundry

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, costs for clothing, uniforms and laundry account for \$12,000. The marginal increase of \$1,000 will cover the costs to replenish uniform shirts, jackets and protective wear for the caretaker groundsman and community programme staff.

#### Materials and Supplies

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, \$417,000 has been allocated for materials and supplies for fiscal year 2025/26. This increase of \$160,000 reflects the costs of added social sector programmes, such as vocational supplies and equipment for the new Senior Intellectual Disability day care programme at the K. Margaret Carter Centre; sport and fitness equipment, educational supplies, and vocational hardware for the extended day care programmes at both the central and western [zone] Community Centres; and recreational supplies to facilitate the Conference to Consultation held by the Office of Youth Affairs. The increased costs will also cover supplies needed by the Youth Policy section.

#### Equipment

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, equipment expenses have an allocation of \$26,000, a reduction of \$16,000 from fiscal year 2024/25. Refurbishment works to fire and safety systems at the three community centres were completed in fiscal year 2024/25, and thus only maintenance works needed to be budgeted for this year.

#### Other Expenses

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, \$186,000 has been allocated for other expenses, which is an increase of \$166,000 above fiscal year 2024/25. This increase will support new social sector programmes such as [Ageing and Disabilities Services'] Seniors Hardship fund, which will cover the costs of food, medication, utility bills or short-term housing for vulnerable persons in a crisis; and the central and western zone Community Centres will provide meals during their extended day [care] programmes.

#### Grants and Contributions

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the allocation for grants and contributions for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$3,825,000, an increase of \$620,000. The increased budget supports additional [grant] funding to

youth organisations offered by the Office of Youth Affairs, and new funding for dementia care navigation and intervention services offered by the Ministry. Also, grant funding for Teen Services and Teen Haven has shifted from the Department of Child and Family Services to the Ministry Headquarters.

#### Revenue Summary

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, revenue summary, page B-292. The majority of the \$643,000 in revenue earnings reflect after-school vouchers purchased, and online payments by parents and guardians to have their children participate in the after-school programmes offered by the Office of Youth Affairs.

#### Employee Numbers (Full-Time Equivalents)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, on page B-293, you will note that there are 87 full-time equivalent positions in the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors Headquarters for fiscal year 2025/26. This covers four full-time equivalents for Headquarters Administration; 11 full-time equivalents in Ageing and Disability Services; 19 full-time equivalents employed with the K. Margaret Carter Centre; one full-time equivalent within Policy Development; and 52 full-time equivalents for the Office of Youth Affairs.

#### Performance Measures

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, performance measures for sections in the Ministry Headquarters are outlined on pages B-294 through B-296.

Madam Chairman, that concludes my budget presentation, completely, for Head 86.

*[Laughter]*

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Junior Minister Senator Simmons. I apologise once again.

Did you receive any questions in advance?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** No.

**The Chairman:** Okay.

Do any . . . Senator Foley. I guess we will start with you and then proceed with any other Senators who wish to comment on these heads.

Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. Thank you, Junior Minister. Please accept my apology on that.

Should I repeat the first question that I had regarding the—

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Yes, please.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Repeat the question. Okay.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Yes, please.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** So, it was regarding the Ministry allocating \$150,000 to continue the dementia care pilot programme which has supported approximately 111 seniors since October 2023. Can the Junior Minister tell us, What is the long-term vision for this pilot programme and how will outcomes be used to justify a full-scale implementation of this programme?

And I do have maybe three supplementals after that. Just let me know how you want it to—

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, do you wish for Senator Foley to ask all of his questions or to respond—

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** I can respond to this one right now.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Great. Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Actually, ask your next question and then I will respond.

**The Chairman:** Yes.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** All right. So, can the Junior Minister also . . . well, let's see here. Has an external evaluation on a data review been conducted to determine its effectiveness for this particular dementia care pilot programme?

**The Chairman:** Thank you.  
Senator Simmons.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Okay. So, to answer your first question, the pilot has shifted from a six-month funding to an annual grant with increased funding to help meet the need. Evaluation of the programme is ongoing thus the metric established to demonstrate impact in areas such as caregiving stress, caregiving confidence and knowledge, hospitalisation of participants and actions around advanced planning. The work on dementia integrated care pathways will help to further define future directions of how to advance the programme in a sustainable manner within our health and social care system.

This Government realises the need for capacity building for [the] dementia care pilot programme and to be able to provide services to more clients. Therefore, we have increased the grant this fiscal year from \$48,000 to \$150,000 as critical needs were identified for more funding to facilitate increased proactive front-line service provisions to meet growing community demands. This will also enable NorthStar Dementia now aligned with Dementia Bermuda to pursue critical, timely advocacy initiatives and proactive and cost-

effective programme development to be more effective to meet the community needs in the future as numbers are expected to increase significantly along with the ageing population. The increase in the grant will enable further development of sustainable . . . multi-disciplinary service provisions required to meet the complex care needs presented by this vulnerable population.

We also have annual reports of the dementia care pilot programme which share the outcome of this programme.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.  
Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Yes, thank you so much for your answer.

One more question on this particular subject for the Junior Minister. Will this programme expand beyond seniors to include younger individuals with dementia? I did a little bit of research on this question because I know in the UK there are approximately 70,800 people under the age of 65 who suffer from an early onset of dementia. So, I am just wondering if this programme will expand beyond seniors.

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, would you like to respond to this question or Senator Foley do you have—

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** I can respond to the question for that one.

**The Chairman:** Yes. Okay.

So, this is your response to your second question, Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** The question was, Has an external daily review been conducted to determine effectiveness? ADS is responsible for evaluating the programme with the Ministry Headquarters. The programme has been based upon international recognised programmes and metrics have been selected in accordance with such. The programme is not tied to age and recognises early onset dementia as eligible clients.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

Senator Foley, do you have any further questions?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** I do have a question regarding senior day care. And that would be still on the same head, Head 86, under the Ageing and Disability Services. Regarding the senior day care facility at Gilbert Institute, with the \$1.5 million budgeted for architectural designs, how does the Ministry intend to ensure the proposed day care centre aligns with current gaps in elder care?

**The Chairman:** That's your question, Senator Foley?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** That is my question.

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, would you like to answer now, or do you prefer for further questions?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** You can ask another question.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Okay.

Question number two is, Will seniors or caregivers and even NGOs be involved in the facility design process? That's my second question. Thank you, Madam Chairman. And in the design process of the day care facility at Gilbert Institute.

**The Chairman:** You can ask any further questions that you may have, Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Okay.

The next question is, Has a needs assessment been completed to justify this specific location and use? That's my second question. And then I have one more question. Is there a capital commitment or timeline to move beyond design to actual construction. That's my final question on that.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.  
Senator Wight.

**Sen. John Wight:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I just have one question. So, when I look at this Head 86, as with any head of any Ministry in the Budget Book, for me, I look at not just how much is being allocated but are we spending it appropriately, effectively and wisely. And when I look at the performance measures on page B-294 and B-295, we capture a lot of information about things we do. Like the number of surveys, and the number of . . . I can't get any feel for the outcomes that we achieved.

I am on a board (I mean, it is public knowledge) of the Bermuda Diabetes Association. So, by way of contrast, when somebody walks in the front door with diabetes, we track that person's progress. Are we making a difference in that person's life? When people donate to the association, we can say with hand on heart that we know we are making differences in people's lives.

When I look at the performance measures, I really can't get any gauge for how effective we are in our community for the funds we are allocating. So, you know, last year we allocated \$11.3 million to this Ministry. We are allocating \$2.6 million more this year; so, \$14.1 million. A year from now, if we sat here how would we be able to measure whether we are making a difference in the lives of our youth, seniors, and those

to whom we are allocating these funds towards? So I guess that is my question.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Wight.

Senator Simmons, do you want to take other questions or are you prepared to respond?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** I can respond and then if there are more questions I can take them afterwards.

**The Chairman:** Okay.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** So, yes, consultation will take place with all stakeholder groups for the design of this facility.

The question was about the senior day care and how does the Ministry propose to align with the current gaps in elder care. ADS works closely with other entities responsible for service regulations and have developed the programme based on gap identifications that occur under the National Senior Strategy and through the ongoing LTC working group.

If somebody has other questions, I could take these questions as well.

**The Chairman:** Do any other . . . would any other Senators like to speak to any of the heads?

Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Yes. This is Senator Foley.

I actually . . . Senator, I'm sorry. Yes, Senator Wight actually answered my final question. So that would be it for me. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** Senator Wight answered your final question or . . .

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** He asked the final question that I had.

**The Chairman:** Okay. Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Would you give me a couple of minutes?

*[Pause]*

**The Chairman:** Yes. Thank you, Senator Simmons.

While we're waiting, just a quick time check. It is now 3:56 pm and we have left remaining Heads 23 and 55.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Okay. I have some answers for you.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** So, measuring impact of funding. Surveys are undertaken after each

programme in terms of effectiveness of youth programmes and for the dementia part of the programme of which [information] was shared with the ministerial statements. So, it is already in the public domain.

Another question was, Has a needs assessment occurred [regarding] the day care sites? The day care sites were reviewed by the clinical and technical teams with Senior Care and Knowledge and Programme Development as well as Public Works to identify if it is a suitable location for the day programme, recognising renovations are required.

One of the gaps identified is when COVID-19 occurred. Most government day care programmes had to shut down because it was not recommended [for] seniors living in the community within residence. This will not have to happen again with the senior day care. The senior day care will also have a dementia-focus, particularly with a notion for the growing demand of dementia care.

Did I miss any questions? Or was . . .

**The Chairman:** I believe there was a question about outcomes. How will outcome and effectiveness be measured?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** So, I did answer that, for measuring the impact upon surveys, like I said, it was shared in ministerial statements. I can read the answer again if you want. But I did state it already. Surveys are undertaken after each programme in terms of effectiveness of youth programmes and for the dementia pilot programme of which information was shared in a ministerial statement. So, it is in the public domain.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Simmons.

Are there any further questions arising from this head?

Senator Wight.

**Sen. John Wight:** I would just ask them that it be included as a performance measure in . . . it's not included and may be in a ministerial statement that comes up at some point in the year, but in terms of this budget performance measure, I don't see it included anywhere. So again, I would just think it would be added here if it's . . . if this is an important determination of how we determine value for spending \$14 million, I would think it would be a performance measure in this Budget Book. That would be my comment but nothing . . . no further questions. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

I noted Senator Wight.

Senator Simmons, would you like to respond?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** One second.

Senator Wight, thank you for that. Yes, we accept your point, and we will take it under advisement. So, thank you.

**The Chairman:** Are there any further comments under this head?

No. Thank you.  
Senator Simmons.

## HEAD 23—DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

Madam Chairman, I now wish to present fiscal year 2025/26 Estimates of Expenditure for Head 23, the Department of Child and Family Services which are found on pages B-297 through B-303 of the Estimate Book.

The mission of the Department [of Child and Family Services] is *Protecting children by strengthening families*. The objectives of the department are found on page B-297.

Madam Chairman, on page B-298 of the Estimates Book, a total of \$21,133,000 has been allocated for Head 23 for fiscal year 2025/26. This represents an increase of [\$1,453,000], or 7 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the department is responsible for promoting and protecting the best interests and social well-being of children, adolescents, and their families and meets these responsibilities with the operations of five programmes:

- Programme 2301—Services to Children and Young Persons
- Programme 2302—Services to Individuals and Families
- Programme 2303—Residential Treatment Services
- Programme 2304—Administration
- Programme 2305—The Mirrors Programme

Madam Chairman, I will address each programme and business unit for the department as set out on page B-298.

Programme 2301, Services to Children and Young Persons

**Hon. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, business unit 33010, the Happy Valley Child Care Centre has a budget of \$1,200,000 for fiscal year 2025/26. The output measures for the Happy Valley Child Care Centre are found on page B-301 of the Estimates Book.

Madam Chairman, Happy Valley Child Care Centre is the only Government-operated child care facility on the Island, which provides high quality child care for a maximum of 44 children whose ages range from three months to four years of age. Priority is given to children referred by helping agencies such as the Department of Child and Family Services, Teen Services, the Department of Health, the Child [Development] Programme and the Department of Financial Assistance. These agencies along with families experiencing various challenges account for 60 per cent of the Centre's intake.

The Centre offers enrichment programmes that encourage family and community involvement and builds upon child development.

Madam Chairman, the estimated revenue for the fiscal year 2025/26 school year as shown on page B-299 is \$192,000.

Madam Chairman, in July 2024, 17 children graduated from the programme and were all well prepared to attend preschool. Their accomplishments were celebrated with a school leaving ceremony at the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute.

Madam Chairman, in fiscal year 2025/26, Happy Valley Child Care Centre will continue to uphold its commitment to partnering with community resources, including the Child Development Programme (CDP), the Department of Health, and Fire and Life Safety Associates.

Madam Chairman, I will turn to programme 2302, Services to Individuals and Families, found on page B-298.

Programme 2302, Services to Individuals and Families

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the activities covered under programme 2302 are:

- Business unit [33020]—Investigating and Screening
- Business unit [33030]—Foster Care
- Business unit 33200—Counselling and Life Skills
- Business unit 33240—Child Safeguarding

Madam Chairman, the estimate for these three business units for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$6,198,000, which represents a decrease of \$37,000.

Madam Chairman, the Intake, Investigation and Assessment section is responsible for providing comprehensive investigations and assessments to children who are referred for services. The 2025/26 budget estimate for business unit 33020 is \$2,245,000, a decrease of 11 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Child and Family Services provides services and support for children and families referred for abuse or neglect. The department is committed to partnering with stakeholders to promote the safety and health of families while protecting children from abuse and neglect.

All referrals that are made to the department are screened to determine if they meet the threshold for abuse and/or neglect utilising the Structured Decision Making Assessment tools. The performance measures for intake and assessments can be found on page B-301 of the Estimates Book.

Madam Chairman, in 2024, the Investigation team received 1,210 new referrals. This is an increase of 204, or 20 per cent, when 1,006 new referrals were reported. Mandated reporters [referred] 1,072, and 138 were referred from other sources in the community.

## Foster Care, Business Unit 33030

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Foster Care section of the Department of Child and Family Services is responsible for providing alternative living arrangements for children under the age of 18 years old who need out-of-home placement. The budget estimate for business unit 33030 for 2025/26 is \$2,672,000. This represents an increase of \$288,000.

Madam Chairman, during 2024, a total of 61 children occupied foster care beds at some point during the year. This represents an increase of three children from the prior year. The team was also responsible for case management duties for the children's birth families and foster families.

During the past year, the Foster Care Programme served a total of seven therapeutic foster [children]. The children in this category have a variety of physical, cognitive, emotional and behavioural challenges.

Out of those seven children, two were referred to overseas facilities for a comprehensive assessment and were recommended for further overseas placement. By the end of 2024, a total of nine children left the Foster Care Programme. Three were reunified with a parent; Three were transferred to Residential Treatment Services; and three aged out of the Foster Care system.

Madam Chairman, in May 2024, Foster Care Month, the foster [care] team held the Annual Appreciation Tea for Bermuda's Foster Parents.

The Foster Care Programme ended in 2024 with Christmas gift donations for all foster children. Items were generously donated from anonymous members of the public and the RenRe Insurance Company.

Madam Chairman, the department acknowledges the foster parents of Bermuda. These are our unsung heroes who provide loving, stable homes to children who have experienced significant trauma as a result of abuse and/or neglect. Every day, they make a foster child's life better with their numerous acts of [care and] kindness.

## Counselling and Life Skills, Business Unit 33200

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the purpose of the Counselling and Life Skills [CLS] business unit is to advance and promote the emotional well-being of youth up to 18 years of age and their families. The budget for this business unit [33200] for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$1,181,000. This represents a decrease of \$8,000, or 1 per cent.

Madam Chairman, several trends were identified in 2024 amongst our youth that included:

- Substance referrals for vaping and marijuana are still an issue with young people. This may be affected by legalisation in some jurisdictions despite this population being minors and their lack of understanding of the dangers of vaping.

- Grief counselling for children who have lost relatives as well as relationships with parents because of divorce.
- A growing need for co-parenting support based on issues of custody and divorce.
- Younger children being referred with complex neurodiversity behavioural issues, such as ADHD, ASD, who require a multidisciplinary team approach to address various needs.
- Parents requiring therapy support who themselves have experienced childhood trauma that is impacting them in adulthood.
- Younger children requiring therapy beyond talk therapy, such as play therapy, interventions to assist with self-regulation of emotions, such as somatic therapy, which focuses on the body and how emotions appear within the body, and movement therapy.
- A need for parenting skills services that help parents understand different developmental stages and what is appropriate behaviour during those stages.

These trends highlight the growing need for counselling resources to support parents, children, and adolescents that are affordable, evidence-based and relatable.

## Child Safeguarding, Business Unit 33250

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, this year, \$100,000 will fund the Child Safeguarding programme, business unit 33250. As per the Child Safeguarding [(Miscellaneous Amendments)] Act 2019, children who are victims of sexual offences or who are convicted of sexual offences and serious personal injury receive both physical and psychological services, which translate to costs incurred for psychosexual assessments and counselling services.

Last year, seven children received psychosexual assessments. Six were victims of sexual offences and one was a perpetrator. All children subsequently received associated counselling [services]. One parent received a comprehensive parenting capacity assessment.

## Programme 2303, Residential Treatment Services

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, programme 2303, Residential Treatment Services found on page B-298 includes Family Preservation, Brangan Home, Youth Development Centre, Observatory Cottage, the Psycho-Educational Programme, Youth Residential Treatment and Independent Living.

This programme has a budget allocation of \$10,388,000. This represents an increase of \$1,618,000, or 18 per cent from the [financial] year 2024/25 budget allocation.

## Family Preservation, Business Unit 33060

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget estimate for business unit 33060 for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$3,836,000. The estimate is 121 per cent more than fiscal year 2024/25. This significant increase is related to the enhancement and expansion of social services provided to the community for our high-risk families.

Madam Chairman, from January 2024 to December 2024, the Family Preservation Team served a combined total of 147 families and 257 children. This is an 8 per cent increase in families and a 7 per cent increase in children served over the prior year.

Caseload complexities and risk levels remained high throughout 2024, thus requiring a higher number of face-to-face contacts, multiple court appearances, family conferences and consultations with community and government stakeholders.

Madam Chairman, in 2024, Department of Child and Family Services (DCFS) continued with its commitment to increase the skills of its front-line Family Preservation workers in engaging and meeting the needs of clients. Officers participated in [Staff] Safety Training, Mental Health First Aid for Adolescents and four attended the 39<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment.

The Family Preservation Team continues to strive to provide effective services to children and families. Performance improvement is an ongoing endeavour, thus enhancing the opportunity for improved client outcomes.

Madam Chairman, the budget allocation for business unit 33070, Brangman Home, is \$1,195,000, a decrease of \$62,000, or 5 per cent.

Madam Chairman, business unit 33080, the Youth Development Centre's budget allocation is \$306,000. This is an increase of \$18,000, or 6 per cent.

The Observatory Cottage that falls under business unit 33090, has a budget of [\$1,172,000], a decrease of \$311,000, or 21 per cent.

Madam Chairman, Residential Treatment Services (RTS) provides group living intervention services to children between the ages of 12 and 18 years old. These are adolescents who are deemed to be at risk in the community and require care and protection in a safe and structured residential environment. All children placed in this service have had their situation and circumstances considered by the Family Court, where it has been deemed appropriate for them to be placed on a care order and as such, become the responsibility of the Director of Child and Family Services.

Madam Chairman, RTS met the performance targets with 100 per cent of residents given independent treatment plans, 100 per cent had service plans and 100 per cent of residents had individual crisis management plans. The team focused on ensuring all plans were aligned to offer the best care for residents and continue to partner with key community stakeholders such as the Bermuda Police Service, Department of Education, Child and Adolescent Services, the Gang

Violence Reduction Team, Department of Court Services, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Bermuda and the Mirrors Programme.

Psycho-Educational Programme, Business Unit 33100

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Psycho-Educational (Psycho-Ed) programme was developed to clinically address children who could not be effectively treated in Bermuda or those who had exhausted all available local therapeutic/treatment services. The budget [estimate] for business unit [33100] is \$2,119,000. This represents less than a 1 per cent increase over 2024/25.

Madam Chairman, the Psycho-Ed Programme provides children with protection, care, and [nurture] by licensed and accredited therapeutic overseas facilities.

In the best interest of the child, the Psycho-Ed Committee utilises an overseas service provider that specialises primarily in providing clinical neuropsychological assessments at Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI). Implementing the neuropsychological assessment at HMHI assisted DCFS in obtaining a clear and comprehensive understanding of the specific needs of clients referred for an assessment.

Madam Chairman, 14 children participated in the Psycho-Ed Programme in 2024. Four children participated in an overseas [neuropsychological] assessment. Three children were assessed at Huntsman Mental Health Institute (HMHI) and one child at Harbor Point Behavioral Health. Two children completed their neuropsychological assessments at HMHI resulting in one child being diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, returning to the local jurisdiction for active case management. And one child was referred for a long-term overseas therapeutic placement. One child remains at HMHI and has not completed the assessment process. One child who completed the neuropsychological assessment process at Harbor Point Behavioral Health was recommended for a long-term overseas therapeutic placement.

Youth Residential Treatment, Business Unit 33110

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, business unit 33110, Youth Residential Treatment's budget allocation for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$1,087,000. This reflects a decrease of 13 per cent compared to fiscal year 2024/25. Madam Chairman, Youth Residential Treatment [serves] as the administrative and professional services arm that delivers comprehensive support, including accounting, management, counselling, and clinical services to all residential homes and programmes. This business unit is responsible for identifying staff training needs, assessing the clinical needs of all children within the programme, and managing facility maintenance and repair issues, which are reported to the director for appropriate action.

Additionally, the unit oversees all Performance and Quality Improvement (PQI) efforts, ensuring that every programme within Residential Treatment Services consistently meets and maintains industry standards. During 2024, two hard-to-fill positions within Youth Residential Treatment were successfully staffed, strengthening the team's capacity to deliver high-quality care and support across all programmes.

Independent Living Programme, Business Unit 33240

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, business unit 33240, on page B-298, Independent Living Programme budget allocation for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$673,000, an increase of 4 per cent.

The Independent Living Programme (ILP) is a pioneering initiative, offering a vital lifeline and safety net for young adults ageing out of the care of the director. This year, the programme celebrated two years of operations, providing the young adults with the support and resources necessary to successfully navigate the challenging transition into adulthood.

Madam Chairman, at the start of 2024, the Independent Living Programme housed four residents. However, one female resident was terminated due to non-compliance. Subsequently, ten referrals were received and four were rejected. By the end of the year, Independent Living Programme was at capacity with nine residents—seven females and two males.

Two residents graduated from The Berkeley Institute. One high schooler moved to the Independent Living Programme in July, completed summer school, and is on the course to graduate from the CedarBridge Academy in 2025. One resident enrolled with the Adult Education School in December 2024 to obtain their GED. Also, each resident had some form of employment, whether full-time, part-time, summer employment, or apprenticeship. By the end of 2024, there were three residents employed full-time, three part-time, one seasonal, and two unemployed.

Madam Chairman, renovations to the Independent Living Programme staff offices and boardroom commenced in November and are progressing steadily. These upgrades aim to enhance the functionality of staff spaces and support continued programme delivery.

In addition, the development of a new studio apartment is underway, which will increase Independent Living Programme's residential capacity to a total of 11 rooms. This unit has been thoughtfully designed to accommodate residents with disabilities, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity within the programme. When not in use for this purpose, the studio will serve as a transitional living space for residents who have demonstrated readiness for independent living, offering an opportunity to experience greater autonomy in the final stages of their Independent Living Programme journey.

Programme 2305—The Mirrors Programme,  
Business Unit 33140

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget allocation for the Mirrors Programme, business unit 33140 for 2025/26 is \$869,000, an increase of 24 per cent. Mirrors has begun to rebuild its team since it transitioned to the Department of Child and Family Services. A full complement of staff is expected this year. One additional post, a Youth and Community Engagement Officer, will be funded this year and the Recruitment [Manager] post will now be fully funded this year for a total complement of six staff for the Mirrors Programme.

Madam Chairman, Mirrors and its partners continue to develop the work in the Social Emotional Development and Life Coaching areas for our community. As an example of the high level of curriculum, the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accreditor observed the February 2025 camp, spoke with campers, staff, volunteers, leadership campers and parents with a positive report for re-accrediting our partner Quantum Learning Global, which extends the accreditation to Mirrors, producing WASC accredited programming. The Mirrors team is congratulated for this accomplishment.

Madam Chairman, Mirrors enrolled 30 youth in the October 2024 SuperCamp Senior Forum (Cohort 19) who are currently in their follow-through phase of the programme with a life coach, with expected completion in June 2025.

Mirrors is expecting to enrol a leadership senior group (cohort 20), in the upcoming year, of twenty-five 14- to 16-year-olds and five junior team leaders to travel to Singapore for the SuperCamp Senior Forum leadership experience. The focus is to build peer leadership skills and harness the peer influence such that they have a positive impact in their schools when they return.

During 2024, Madam Chairman, 60 middle school students participated in the All In! 8 Keys of Excellence [prefect] training across the three middle schools; 33 youth participated in the five-day SuperCamp Junior Forum workshop, and 20 youth were supported through the out-of-school suspension and drop-in service programme.

Madam Chairman, PeerForward Bermuda travelled overseas in 2024 with a team of 16 peer leaders, four advisors, two college coaches and two support staff for the Mirrors-endorsed college and career readiness programmes at The Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge Academy. All trainings in the PeerForward programme received 100 per cent positive experience in content and experience.

Madam Chairman, [172] students provided art and digital submissions in the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Art and Digital competition themed "Feels Like Home." The upcoming 2025 theme is "Faces of Bermuda" which will showcase student summer art.

Madam Chairman, Mirrors continues to find ways to engage parents to attend training to build skills for positive youth development. Madam Chairman, 384

parents participated in the programme while 330 volunteers, educators and youth workers attended programming in 2024.

Madam Chairman, 86 adults provided roughly 204 service hours, and 209 youth provided roughly 656 service hours in the Mirrors Field of Learning Garden. Students were able to engage in sustainable gardening curricula and harvest vegetables, donating them across the Island to seniors, group living homes and families.

Madam Chairman, I take this opportunity to thank corporate Bermuda, the Alumni Board members and the Mirrors team for their commitment to the development of Bermuda's youth.

#### Programme 2304, Administration

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, business unit 33120, Administration and business unit 33130, Grant Funding fall under programme 2304 with a combined budget estimate for fiscal year 2025/26 of \$2,478,000, reflecting a decrease of \$404,000 or 14 per cent.

#### Administration, Business Unit 33120

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the Administration section of DCFS is responsible for the general supervision of the sections within the department and the oversight of the Psycho-Educational Programme, the Mirrors Programme, Child Safeguarding and Court Social work. The budget estimate for business unit 33120 for this year is \$2,383,000. This reflects a 2 per cent increase.

Madam Chairman, in response to the recommendations of the SafeLives UK review, a Domestic Liaison social worker joined the Department of Child and Family Services in April. This officer brings experience as a complex needs independent domestic violence advisor and will work in partnership with the Centre Against Abuse.

The establishment of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) was another SafeLives UK recommendation, which has been in operation during the past [two] years.

From its inception in April 2023 until December 2024, MARAC has reviewed a total of 143 cases. These cases include couples, families with children, and seniors/vulnerable persons who experienced family abuse.

DCFS recorded 197 investigations for neglect in 2024, specifically related to child exposure to family violence/domestic [abuse]. This reflects an increase from the 157 investigations recorded at the end of 2023, continuing a concerning year-over-year upward trend.

Children exposed to domestic abuse face both short-term and long-term challenges. Madam Chairman, it is critical to recognise that children learn and are shaped by their environment from birth and even

in utero. The harmful effects of domestic abuse must not be underestimated, and the community has a responsibility to act.

#### Grant Funding, Business Unit 33130

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget estimate for business unit 33130 for 2025/26 is \$95,000, representing an 83 per cent decrease from 2024/25. This reduction is due to a shift of the grant allocation of \$375,000 for Teen Haven and Teen Services from DCFS to the Ministry Headquarters.

Madam Chairman, \$75,000 in grant funding is to support the cross-ministry initiative and assist families in crisis through the development of coordinated, inter-agency responses that address urgent and multi-faceted needs. Madam Chairman, \$20,000 has been allocated to MARAC to cover education, promotion and awareness about domestic violence.

#### Subjective Analysis of Current Account Estimates

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, I will now present the subjective analysis of current account estimates for the Department of Child and Family Services as found on page B-299 of the Estimates Book.

#### Salaries

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget allocated for Salaries is \$11,926,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, an increase of \$1,681,000, or 16 per cent more than the original budget for fiscal year 2024/25.

The salary growth largely reflects increases in FTEs to ensure that a new community-based intensive model of intervention, i.e., the Intensive Family Preservation programme, can be implemented under the Family Preservation section. The increase is also explained by funding for an additional full-time equivalent for the Mirrors Programme, and one new full-time equivalent for the Foster Care programme. Finally, negotiated salary uplifts for public officers also explain the increase for 2025/26.

#### Wages

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the estimate for wages is \$187,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, representing an increase of \$11,000 compared to fiscal year 2024/25. This is due to the adjustment of an understated annual wage in the prior year; however, negotiated pay uplifts for industrial employees accounted for the majority of the increase.

#### Other Personnel Costs

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget expenditure allocated for other personnel costs

remained unchanged from fiscal year 2024/25 to fiscal year 2025/26.

#### Training

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the \$2,000 increase in training expenses for fiscal year 2025/26 is representative of new, specialised onboarding training for employees within the Family Preservation section.

#### Transport

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, expenditure for transport has been budgeted at \$70,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, indicative of a \$25,000, or 56 per cent, increase over the prior year. The Foster Care Programme provides transportation services for children to and from school and some after-school activities. The section has increased its transportation budget by this amount due to the number of children involved in several after-school activities, and special professional services that are time-sensitive.

#### Travel

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, total travel expenses have been budgeted at \$252,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, an increase of \$6,000 over [fiscal] year 2024/25. This represents minor increases in the amounts budgeted for overseas conferences and hotel costs for the Foster Care and Investigation and Screening programmes.

#### Communications

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, communications, inclusive of phones, courier and postal costs, are budgeted at \$225,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, which represents a \$37,000, or 20 per cent, increase over the budget allocation for fiscal year 2024/25. Additional staff hired for the new Intensive Family Preservation initiative will each require a cellular phone for safety purposes. Also, the Counselling and Life Skills section will be issued cellular phones during 2025/26, as their client base has increased, and more time is anticipated to be spent at the schools and meeting clients outside of the office. Lastly, the rise in the budget covers increased costs of local calls for the programmes having satellite offices.

#### Advertising and Promotion

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget of \$18,000 allocated for advertising and promotion expenditures increased by \$5,000 for fiscal year 2025/26. This is to support a planned campaign on mandatory reporting by the Investigation and Screening section.

#### Professional Services

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, Professional Services budgeted at \$3,929,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, represents a decrease of \$175,000. The Independent Living programme requires a security presence every night and weekends at the facility. Funding for this security was redirected from Professional Services to the Security Equipment (Minor Equipment) budget line in error. The necessary change will be made to the budget.

#### Rentals

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the estimate for Rentals for [budget] year 2025/26 is \$1,682,000, a decrease of \$8,000 from the prior budget year. This decrease represents a minor adjustment to the rental budget within the Independent Living programme.

#### Repair and Maintenance

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, for fiscal year 2025/26, the costs of Repairs and Maintenance is \$611,000, an increase of \$64,000 over fiscal year 2024/25. The Brangman Home, Observatory Cottage, and Transitional Living programmes have each budgeted additional funds to carry out deep scale cleaning of their facilities on a quarterly basis.

Extra money has also been budgeted to cover vehicle maintenance to ensure staff are able to travel Island-wide to carry out their duties, and for ageing kitchen and office equipment at the Brangman Home.

#### Insurance

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the \$3,000 increase in insurance costs will ensure that the annual re-charge for psychologist medical professional liability is covered.

#### Energy

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, for fiscal year 2025/26 the Energy budget has been allocated \$318,000, representing a \$14,000, or 5 per cent increase over fiscal year 2025/26. This increase will support fuel costs for two new vehicles to be used by the new Intensive Family Preservation programme.

#### Clothing, Uniforms and Laundry

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, \$176,000 has been budgeted for clothing, uniforms and laundry expenses.

This is a \$5,000, or 3 per cent, decrease that is attributed to the Brangman Home redirecting funding

from their clothing budget to finance increased gasoline costs, as [previously] mentioned.

#### Materials and Supplies

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the estimate for Materials and Supplies for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$512,000, representing a \$136,000, or 36 per cent increase over the 2024/25 budget allocation. Two-thirds of this increase is due to the rising costs to provide children's meals within the Happy Valley Child Care Centre, as well as for residents within the Brangman Home, Observatory Cottage and Independent Living programmes.

The remaining one-third of the increase is explained by additional funding needed for office supplies, stationery, printing and cleaning supplies across the various programmes, and the Independent Living programme has also budgeted more for linen and toiletries for residents.

#### Equipment (Minor Capital)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, minor equipment expenses have been allocated \$111,000 for fiscal year 2025/26, an increase of \$83,000 over fiscal year 2024/25. The increase highlights an administrative error as these monies are earmarked for spending on contracted security services at the Independent Living programme, and not security equipment. The necessary change will be made to the budget.

#### Other Expenses

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the budget for Other Expenses increased by \$25,000 for fiscal year 2025/26. This increase will support a new social sector initiative funded by the Administration section for a Hardship Support fund for families facing a financial crisis, i.e., those having insufficient money to cover the costs of food, medication, or utility bills.

The fund seeks to provide immediate assistance to people, pending being assessed by the Department of Financial Assistance, or for those who may not be eligible for financial assistance.

#### Grants and Contributions

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, the amount allocated for Grants and Contributions for fiscal year 2025/26 is \$685,000, representing a \$451,000, or 40 per cent reduction in funding from fiscal year 2024/25. As shown on page C-21, grants awarded to Teen Services and Teen Haven (shown as Grant to YHED) have decreased by \$375,000, since these grants have been transferred over to the Ministry Headquarters. Also, the grant for the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee (MARAC) has been reduced by \$76,000, as a social worker (Domestic Liaison) post

has been created within Family Preservation, to provide these services. The remaining amount budgeted for MARAC will be spent on Domestic Abuse Awareness activities.

#### Revenue Summary (Page B-299)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, for fiscal year 2025/26, Revenue for nursery fees earned by the Happy Valley Child Care Centre is estimated to be on par with the 2024/25 [estimate]. Additional earnings of \$33,000 are anticipated to be collected by the Independent Living programme in respect of residential fees from clients.

#### Employee Numbers (Full-Time Equivalents)

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Madam Chairman, on page B-300 you will note that there are 117 full-time equivalent positions for the Department of Child and Family Services for fiscal year 2025/26.

This is an increase of 11 full-time equivalents compared to fiscal year 2024/25. The increase is explained by the additional nine funded temporary additional posts budgeted for the new community-based intensive model of intervention, Intensive Family Preservation Programme, operating under the Family Preservation Section. The temporary additional posts will include three social worker assistants, four social workers, one clinical social worker, and one behavioural support specialist.

It should also be noted that during November 2024, the department completed realignment of its positions relative to the approved organisational structure. This resulted in some positions being moved to other business units and thus accounts for the remaining difference shown on page B-300.

Madam Chairman, this concludes our presentation for Head 23, the Department of Child and Family Services.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Simmons.

The time is now 4:46 pm, and I would like to ask if any Senators would like to speak to these heads that were just presented.

Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you, Madam Chairman, and thank you to Senator Simmons for Head 23, Child and Family Services. I do just have a few questions on page B-298, business unit 33240, the Independent Living Programme.

First, I will just skip over that part, but I will just go straight to the numbers. I was looking for some matrix based on some long-term matrix, looking at the performance measures. I didn't see any performance measures in the Budget Book. Can the Junior Minister provide any long-term success matrix being used to determine its actual impact, the programme's impact?

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, would you like to know if there are any further questions?

Do you have any further questions, Senator Foley?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Yes, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Please ask them.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Okay. My second question is on page B-298, unit number 33030, Foster Care Adoption Services. There is over \$2.5 million being allocated. My question is, with challenges in long-term foster placements, how is the department addressing the shortage of available foster homes and timely adoption placements?

Should I continue?

**The Chairman:** Yes, please, Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** All right. Question number three, is the current stipend competitive enough to attract new foster parents?

Next question is, and this is under the same business unit, has the Ministry updated its outreach or recruitment strategy to boost interest from the public?

And my final question is, Are court delays impacting adoption timelines? And if so, how is this being addressed? And that is my final question for page B-298, business unit 33030.

I do have one more set of questions on the same page, but on a different business unit, 33250. Can I continue?

**The Chairman:** Just one moment, please, Senator Foley.

Senator Simmons, would you like to respond to the initial set?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Sure. Give me one second.

So, to answer one of the questions, the programme is in its infancy stages, so the impact will not be normally . . . sorry. The programme is in its infancy stages, so the impact will not normally be measurable until we reach the four- or five-year mark.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** You can ask some more questions.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Okay.

**The Chairman:** Senator Foley, I believe you had further questions.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Yes. My last set of questions on page B-298, business unit 33250. Under Child Safe-guarding, there is \$100,000 being allocated for this.

With over 250 child protection referrals annually (this is what I found) how has the department improved response times and interagency coordination to protect vulnerable children?

**The Chairman:** Senator Simmons, would you like to hear all of the questions?

If you have any further questions, please continue, Senator Foley.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Well, I will ask this question. I think I found the answer, but is there a current audit or evaluation on child protection caseloads?

And my next question is, How many frontline caseworkers are employed and is staffing adequate?

And one more question, How is trauma-informed care being integrated into investigations?

And that's my final question, Madam Chairman. Thank you, Junior Minister.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Foley.

Would any other senators like to speak to any of the heads that were raised?

Senator Cunningham.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. I just have a general question, and it is are there any plans to amend or update the Children Act as you go through the legislative calendar?

Thank you.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Okay, to answer another question. The department is currently assessing foster parent recruitment strategies with the goal of increasing the foster parent pool.

**The Chairman:** I believe Senator Foley had another question.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Just one final question. I found it in my notes here, and I am going to refer to . . . let's see here, page C-27 under Heading 23, Child and Family Services. The Ministry is renting Customs House on Front Street for approximately \$795,000, which is considerably more expensive than any other listing on Schedule C for any other government department. This is by about \$200,000. Could the Junior Minister please explain why this is the case?

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Okay, while we wait for some more answers, I have three answers for you.

Yes, files are audited on a monthly basis to ensure compliance and maintain industry standards.

The next [answer] is adoption applications in court are not being delayed by court schedules.

Another answer is yes; there are plans to update the Child[ren] Act. A review of the Act will commence this year. The investigations are screened using

the structured decision-making tools. That provides the response time of 24 hours, 5 days, or 10-day response.

**The Chairman:** Are there any further questions on the heads that were presented?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** No further questions. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you. We will just await some further answers.

*[Pause]*

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** So, the department occupies several floors on 131 Front Street to ensure all programmes and specialty services are in the same area. This allows us to be more client-focused, so it is not just one floor.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Simmons. Are we awaiting any further responses? Yes.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** So, I will say this. I have approximately seven minutes left in my debate. I can read the next head, or if you have any questions for me on the next head, you might as well ask, because if I start reading . . . if I start reading, you won't get anything.

**The Chairman:** Senators, you have heard the offer from Junior Minister Senator Simmons.

Do you have any questions for Head 55?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Yes, I do. Madam Chairman, I do have a few questions.

**The Chairman:** If you could, I would assume, ask them in succession.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Okay.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** I have two answers first, and then he could ask the questions.

**The Chairman:** Okay.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Okay. In addition to the foster fee stipends, fees were last reviewed in 2021. All needs of the children are covered by the department, including, but not limited to, medical, dental, therapy, clothing, and extracurricular activities.

The multi-agency referral meetings are held weekly with the Bermuda Police. The department is also a member of the Sexual Assault Response Team, the Hospital Child Protection Team, and MARAC [Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference]. These teams review cases monthly and also on an as-needed basis.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Simmons.

Senator Foley, I believe you had questions for Head 55?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** Thank you, Madam Chairman. This is under Head 55, Financial Assistance. I am going to break it down to two questions.

On page number B-305, business unit 6505, Grants Administration, Cost Control and Forecasting. With approximately \$55 million plus in annual spend, what strategies are in place for reducing long-term reliance on financial assistance while ensuring people still meet basic living standards?

**The Chairman:** Please ask your next question, Senator.

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** And the next question is under the same head, page B-305, business unit 65050, Grants Administration. There has been an increase in the applicants aged 18 to 24. What specific interventions are in place to reduce dependency among young adults?

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

Do any other Senators have questions on Head 55?

Senator Cunningham?

Oh, no. Okay. We will await responses. Thank you, Junior Minister Senator Simmons, for this offer.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** I also want to say that the investigation team is comprised of five social workers and five social worker assistants.

And I would also like to add that foster parents . . . I believe foster parents should become foster parents for the love of the children. Compensation is not why you do it. You don't get paid to be a foster parent. The stipend that is received should go back to the children for their needs. So, I would say that if you want to become a foster parent to get paid, then don't be a foster parent.

So, strategies for reducing dependencies on financial assistance include partnership with Workforce Development to find jobs for the clients to get them off of financial assistance.

The department has just had a review from the management consultants. And we are going through the necessary processes to ensure staffing levels meet industry standards. They have to have a personal development plan with Workforce Development when they are on financial assistance.

So, I believe that . . . do you have any more questions or is that it?

**Sen. Maurice Foley:** No, thank you, Junior Minister.

That's it.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Do you want me to read my brief for a minute, or am I done?

*[Laughter]*

**The Chairman:** If you would like to proceed with moving.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you.

Madam Chairman, I move that Heads 86, 23, and 55 be approved as printed.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved that Heads 86, 23, and 55 be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?  
Hearing no objections, it is agreed to.

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you, Madam Chairman.

*[Motion carried: The Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors, Heads 86, 23 and 55 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26.]*

**The Chairman:** For the benefit of the listening public, we will just switch Chairmen of the Committee prior to moving on to the next debate, which will be Heads 9, 32, and 43, Cabinet.

*[Sen. John Wight, Chairman]*

**The Chairman:** Senators, we are now in Committee of the Whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26. The heads to be debated are Head 9, on page B-38 regarding Cabinet Office; Head 32, on page B-57, the Department of Planning; and Head 43, on page B-62, Information and Digital Technology.

The time is 5:03 pm. The time allocated for the Cabinet Ministry is two hours. The Junior Minister is Senator Fubler.

Senator, how do you wish to proceed?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I will be reading through the entirety of the brief before fielding questions today.

**The Chairman:** Very good, Senator Fubler. Thank you. Please proceed.

## **CABINET OFFICE AND DIGITAL INNOVATION**

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am pleased to present the budget for Head 9, the Cabinet Office, and Digital Innovation found on pages B-38 through B-44 and C-4, C-9, and C-17 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure 2025/26.

## **HEAD 9—CABINET OFFICE**

### Mandate or Mission

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation operates at the centre of the public service, providing leadership, advice, and guidance to ensure delivery of the Government's policies and government services. This direction and steering are supported by the budgets presented herein.

### Expenditure Overview

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, a total of \$13,834,000 for 2025/26 has been allocated for the Head and constitutes approximately 26 per cent of the budget allocated for the Ministry as a whole. This figure represents an increase of \$1,663,000, or approximately 14 per cent, over the previous fiscal year's figures due primarily to salary uplifts, as negotiated with the Bermuda Public Service Union earlier this year, and additional spending under Digital Innovation, which I will detail further.

### Revenue Overview

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the revenue estimate for the subjective analysis of current accounts estimates for Head 9 is found on page B-41. The material difference is accounted for in the reduction of the estimated fees to be collected from PATI fees, anticipating that most requests will fall outside of the requirement to charge any fees at all, therefore reducing the estimated amount by \$45,000, or 90 per cent less than last year's estimates.

### Subjective Analysis

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** The subjective analysis of current account estimates of the Department of the Cabinet Office may be found on page B-41. The main material differences in this year's budgets are due to salaries, professional services, and other expenses.

Salaries for this head have increased due to the salary uplift noted earlier, and the addition of funding for two new posts in the London Office, as well as the political assistant for the Minister, which can be seen on page B-41. The total of those salary increases is \$629,000, which is a 9 per cent increase over the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, the other notable difference is the increase in professional services, which reflects a strategic investment in providing funding to support the Digital Transformation Team's activities, which accounts for the increase of \$1,064,000. This represents a 39 per cent increase over the previous year, which is a direct result of the Digital Transformation Team's establishment in 2024. For the sake of clarity,

professional services within this cost centre also fund essential roles and partnerships that bolster Bermuda's global presence and domestic operations.

These include the consultants staffing the Brussels and Washington Offices, a special advisor for Middle Eastern Affairs and Policy, and a special representative to the Middle East and Africa. Additionally, support services for the overseas offices are covered along with lobbyists in Washington, DC, the Global Health Platform Partner for the Wellness Initiative, chairpersons for union negotiations, special contracts for the PATI/PIPA Unit, and international media engagement partners.

Mr. Chairman, there is one notable material decrease from the previous year's figures of \$50,000 due to funding allocated in 2024/25 for the Foreign Office anniversary celebration not required for this year's activities, which is noted on page B-40 in the line item of the Brussels Office.

#### Capital Expenditure

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Capital development for this head can be found on page C-4 of the Budget Book. It details \$1 million allocated for community clubs and community investments.

Mr. Chairman, the Cabinet Office strategically invests in Bermuda's community clubs and essential community initiatives. These vital allocations serve a multifaceted purpose. They are dedicated to fostering youth development through sports and enrichment programmes, supporting crucial facility upgrades and infrastructure improvements for clubs and public spaces, and providing critical aid to vulnerable populations through essential services.

Furthermore, these investments are designed to stimulate local job creation and economic activity while actively addressing pressing social challenges and promoting Bermuda's rich culture and sporting traditions. It is important to note that all grants are allocated based on submitted applications with decisions made through a thorough evaluation process to ensure transparency and equitable distribution. Maintaining these avenues of support underscores this Government's commitment to empowering community organisations and building a more resilient and inclusive Bermuda for all.

#### Capital Acquisitions

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, capital acquisitions can be found on page C-9 of the Budget Book and total \$520,000, with \$20,000 allocated for office furniture and equipment, and \$500,000 allocated to the Cooperative Food Supply Initiative.

Mr. Chairman, the Cooperative Food Initiative is a multifaceted strategic effort designed to directly address the high cost of living, particularly food prices, and enhance the Island's food security. Driven by the observation that previous duty reductions have not

consistently translated to lower consumer prices, the initiative aims to introduce greater competition into the grocery market.

This bold approach includes exploring the repurposing of existing government facilities for cooperative grocery operations. Beyond consumer affordability, the Government strongly champions increased local food production to reduce reliance on imports and build Island-wide resilience. This broader commitment to the cooperative model extends to wealth generation and community ownership, with the Government poised to introduce Bermuda's first dedicated cooperative legislation in 2025, solidifying the legal framework for these member-owned enterprises across various sectors.

#### Grants and Contributions

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Lastly, Mr. Chairman, I note that grants and contributions as found on page C-17 show an overall allocation of \$78,000, which is the same as the previous fiscal year's allocation, with \$50,000 for future leaders, which includes \$25,000 for scholarships. Also captured in this category is a projected \$25,000 for regional hurricane relief efforts that may be needed given predictions of a volatile hurricane season this year.

The Cabinet Office is a key partner and supporter of the Future Leaders Programme, a youth-centric initiative that provides an intensive three-week summer programme dedicated to empowering bright and passionate young Bermudians. It provides a unique blend of academic study, hands-on community engagement, and invaluable mentorship, fostering a deep understanding of critical social issues from inequality to leadership. The programme's core aim is to equip these future leaders with the skills, knowledge, and confidence to drive positive change and contribute meaningfully to Bermuda's ongoing development.

Continuing Bermuda's commitment to a regional hurricane relief fund is a powerful expression of regional solidarity. Beyond the direct benefit of a safety net, this investment significantly enhances Bermuda's influence and strengthens its vital ties with the wider Caribbean. By actively participating in such collective mechanisms, Bermuda solidifies its role as a responsible and engaged partner within the Caribbean community. This deepens reciprocal relationships, fosters goodwill, and amplifies Bermuda's voice within critical regional bodies like the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA), and CARICOM.

In an era of escalating climate challenges this collaborative approach is not just about emergency response, it is about building a shared resilience and projecting Bermuda's leadership on the international stage, reinforcing its reputation as a stable and supportive jurisdiction in the region.

#### Manpower

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, employee numbers can be found on page B-42 of the Budget Book, and overall, there is a net increase of three employees more than the previous fiscal year, or 6 per cent overall increase in staffing. The overall staffing change is a result of decreases and increases across various business units.

Business unit 19000, which is General Administration, saw a reduction of two positions, a senior finance officer and a social media communications officer. Conversely, additions included one protocol officer, in business unit 19010, Protocol and Hospitality, one administrative officer in business unit 19015, which is Policy and Strategy, and two employees in the London Office, which is business unit 19035, and one Senior Finance Officer in business unit 19040.

#### Performance Measures by Business Unit

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that the department's forecast performance measures for fiscal year 2024/25 were largely achieved. I will now delve into the main business units, showcasing their recent achievements and projecting their strategic use of allocated resources.

#### Business Unit 19000, Administration

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, business unit 19000, Administration, serves as the central pillar for the strategic leadership and operational oversight of Bermuda's public service. This critical unit funds the public service executive encompassing key leadership roles such as the Head of the Public Service, the Deputy Head of the Public Service, and all permanent secretaries, who are instrumental in driving ministerial objectives. Additionally, it supports the Cabinet Secretary, who acts as the Premier's principal advisor on policy and provides essential strategic administration support to Cabinet.

The unit also covers the necessary administrative support staff and Premier's aide, ensuring the seamless functioning of government's highest levels in the effective delivery of public service.

#### Business Unit 19010, Protocol and Official Hospitality

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Protocol and Official Hospitality function is essential for upholding the Island's international reputation and ensuring the dignified execution of official engagements. This unit acts as the primary guardian of diplomatic protocol and official etiquette.

Mr. Chairman, the core responsibilities of this unit include advising government officials, from the Premier to the Governor's Office, on all matters of diplomatic conduct, such as precedents, forms of address, flag etiquette, and ceremonial gift exchanges, ensuring Bermuda adheres to international standards. They

meticulously manage the logistics and ceremonial aspects of official visits by foreign dignitaries, including heads of state, ministers, and ambassadors, coordinating everything from their arrival and departure to their official meetings, accommodations, and cultural engagements.

Additionally, Mr. Chairman, the unit is crucial for the organisation and coordination of significant national and ceremonial events, like state dinners and national celebrations, where strict adherence to formal protocol is paramount. This extends to overseeing the proper use and management of key government venues for social hosting, such as Camden, and managing the intricate process of issuing formal invitations and compiling accurate guest lists for official functions. This unit also serves as a vital liaison with foreign missions, facilitating the accreditation of diplomatic representatives in Bermuda and fostering ongoing relationships.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, the Protocol and Official Hospitality Unit plays a crucial role in upholding Bermuda's international standing and reputation for graciousness. This unit meticulously coordinates official engagements, including national celebrations like parades, ensuring adherence to diplomatic etiquette and cultural sensitivities. They also extend Bermuda's warm welcome to returning sports teams and other significant groups, orchestrating arrival ceremonies and hospitality arrangements that highlight our appreciation for their achievements and contributions to our Island's pride.

Mr. Chairman, the unit's activities of the past fiscal year emphasise the Protocol and Official Hospitality Unit's critical function in upholding Bermuda's standing in orchestrating key national moments. Their meticulous work encompasses significant events such as the arrival and swearing-in of the new governor, the precise coordination of two Throne Speeches, and the seamless management of the Premier's Annual Cup Match reception.

Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, their expertise extended to facilitating crucial international engagements, notably through successfully hosting the Public Administration and Consultation Affairs Committee (PACAC), a select committee of the UK House of Commons, as PACAC often examines the constitutional arrangements and the UK's relationship with its Overseas Territories. The unit ensured Bermuda's leading regional role was a key focus of the visit, effectively showcasing our Island.

Mr. Chairman, these highlights exemplify the unit's invaluable contribution to Bermuda's dignified presence, both domestically and on the global stage. Looking ahead, we are confident that the Protocol and Official Hospitality Unit will continue its exemplary work, ensuring Bermuda's image remains impeccably upheld, and our international relationships are consistently strengthened in the coming year.

#### Business Unit 19015, Policy and Strategy

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Policy and Strategy Unit [PSU] is central to delivering better policymaking across government, directly improving Bermuda's economic, environmental, and social well-being. The PSU significantly enhances the policymaking capabilities of our senior officers by providing targeted training, including for those in the Executive Leadership Programme. This support focusses on crafting robust and implementable public policy, and includes workshops on writing and advancing Cabinet memoranda, emphasising inter-ministerial coordination for a more joined-up and effective government. The unit also offers strategic and technical guidance to the Cabinet Office, supporting the Public Service Executive in proper record-keeping, and tracking progress on public administrative policy initiatives.

A key function of the PSU is serving as the Information Officer for the Cabinet Office. This entails managing the strict legal obligations under the Public Access to Information Act (or PATI Act) 2010, which requires processing and responding to PATI requests within specific timeframes, and annually reporting on all requests received. This time-consuming, yet crucial process is expertly managed by the unit.

Last year, the PSU achieved significant milestones. They played a central role in developing and implementing the Public Service Strategic Plan 2024–2027, a comprehensive blueprint for modernising the public service with a focus on digital transformation, customer centricity, and excellence.

The unit was instrumental in advancing the Government's economic agenda, contributing to initiatives for stimulating job creation, attracting investment, and supporting local businesses through policy review and framework development. Furthermore, the PSU was at the forefront of policy development in crucial areas, such as artificial intelligence policy, ensuring its ethical and responsible use within government operations. Their work also extended to facilitating legislative reforms and contributing to social initiatives aimed at building a fairer and more inclusive Bermuda.

Specific achievements from the past year include ensuring the meticulous recording of public service executive meetings, successfully delivering training initiatives on Cabinet memoranda drafting and public policy development, enhancing governmental efficiency, providing comprehensive project support, including research, project management, and report submission for the Ministers and Members of the Legislature Salary Review, meticulously recording, tracking, and periodically reporting on all Throne Speech and platform commitments, offering vital project support to the Ministry of Economy and Labour for the Economic Recovery Plan.

These highlights underscore the unit's invaluable contribution to Bermuda's dignified presence and strategic progress, both domestically and on the global stage. In the coming fiscal year, the Policy and Strategy Unit will continue to provide similar critical support for

various government-wide initiatives, reinforcing strategic planning and execution across the public service.

#### Business Unit 19020, Safety and Health

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Safety and Health business unit within the Ministry of the Cabinet Office plays a critical role in safeguarding the well-being of all public officers and ensuring the operational integrity of government facilities. Its core function is to develop, implement, and monitor comprehensive occupational safety and health policies and programmes across the entire public service.

This unit provides immense value by creating a safer working environment, which in turn reduces workplace incidents, minimises associated costs, for example lost time and medical expenses, and enhances overall productivity and morale within government departments.

Mr. Chairman, this Government's commitment to a safe and healthy work environment has been demonstrated through significant progress in the current fiscal year. Between April and August 2024, comprehensive safety and health audits were conducted across numerous government facilities, including Lyceum Preschool, Westgate, the Farm Facility, Ward Clinic, Delwood Middle School, the Co-Ed Facility, and several government administration buildings. These efforts extended to site reviews at correctional facilities and mould-contaminated government sites, done in close coordination with environmental health, with follow-up reports detailing corrective action plans.

Mr. Chairman, in respect to safety policies and programmes, the Government's new drug and alcohol policy was finalised, with procedures drafted and thoroughly reviewed in collaboration with the Department of Employee and Organisational Development (DEOD), the Government Laboratory, the Department for National Drug Control, and the Bermuda Industrial Union. The initial phase of implementing this policy, including policy-specific Q&A sessions and integration with HR systems and training rollout planned by DEOD is now underway.

Regular monthly safety communications were also sent to health and safety committees across all departments. Furthermore, Mr. Chairman, over a dozen workplace and building inspections and hazard reviews were completed across multiple ministries. Critical issues such as mould, ventilation failures, storm damage, fall hazards, and overcrowding risks in administrative buildings were addressed.

Mr. Chairman, the Occupational Safety and Health [OSH] Officer also reviewed contractor safety practices and risk control protocols during live electrical works, ensuring adherence to the highest standards. These efforts directly contributed to an increase in compliance and training, with OSH training delivered to multiple departments covering topics like introduction

to OSH, workplace accident investigations, and health and safety committee duties.

Guidance materials and safety orientation slides were also prepared for onboarding, and targeted support was provided to departments seeking assistance with health and safety engagement and compliance.

Looking ahead to fiscal year 2025/26, Mr. Chairman, the Government plans to execute a comprehensive, government-wide workplace safety audit across all ministries, excluding the uniformed services and the judiciary. Additionally, a centralised risk registry will be developed to track performance and regulatory compliance and expand the training curriculum to include crucial topics such as chemical safety and hazard communication, workplace violence and harassment prevention, and fire safety and emergency evacuation.

Mr. Chairman, another aim is to launch an internal health and safety hub, which will feature a digital incident reporting platform to streamline safety alerts and corrective actions, and relaunch ministry-level health and safety committees with refreshed terms of reference and accountability frameworks, a further testament to this Government's commitment to a safe and healthy public service.

#### Business Unit 19035, London Office

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the London Office continues to drive forward Bermuda's relationship with the United Kingdom through highest-level dialogue with the UK Government and by continued engagement with departments of His Majesty's Government across Whitehall.

The Office continues to work in cohesion with governments of the Overseas Territories on shared policy areas and engaging collectively with both Houses of the UK Parliament, the Diplomatic Corps, such as embassies and high commissions, the United Kingdom Overseas Territories Association, the Commonwealth Secretariat, along with all UK-based Commonwealth associations, the general UK public to include the private sector, civil societies and those who have a general or vested interest in Bermuda, such as the Bermuda Society, and importantly, Bermudians living in the UK, including our students.

Mr. Chairman, the London Office continues to provide the necessary immediate assistance and guidance throughout its consular function to Bermudians living and studying in the UK, throughout Europe and, on occasion, Bermudians in other parts of the world.

Mr. Chairman, the London Office has created a reassignment position of a Deputy UK Representative to facilitate a greater focus on delivering investment opportunities by working with the relevant UK Government departments and other key stakeholders in the UK as part of the Government's economic diplomacy objective. The intention is to make this position permanent, and it will allow greater focus for the increased

amount and complexity of counsellor cases. The London Office will continue to offer placement opportunities for internships as well as summer students through partnership with the Department of Workforce Development.

#### Business Unit 19040, Ministry Administration

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, business unit 19040, designated as Ministry Administration, serves as the central operational hub for the Ministry of the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation. This unit is fundamental to the Ministry's efficient functioning, providing vital infrastructure and support. Its core responsibilities include directly supporting the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation and coordinating all departments and units under the Ministry's purview.

Mr. Chairman, the key departments and functions falling within its strategic and operational oversight are the Post Office, Libraries and Archives, Planning, Information and Digital Technologies, Communication, Employee and Organisational Development and Project Management and Procurement. This centralised coordination ensures seamless communication, aligned strategic direction and integrated efforts across this diverse portfolio, ultimately contributing to a unified and responsive government administration and the effective delivery of public service.

#### Business Unit 19045, Washington, DC Office

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Washington, DC Office is mandated to cultivate essential relationships with both business and government stakeholders, championing Bermuda's financial services and engaging in constructive dialogue with US political thought leaders to safeguard the Island's economic interests.

Mr. Chairman, for the fiscal term 2024/25, the DC Office successfully met all its key objectives. These included actively engaging with vital contacts to inform US thought leaders about Bermuda's pivotal role as an international financial services centre and a premier tourist destination. The Office also executed associated business development functions and provided crucial advice on emerging US policies and legislative measures that could impact Bermuda.

Furthermore, it advised on and managed direct engagements by the Premier and Ministers with their DC contacts while also identifying opportunities to promote Bermuda's environmental initiatives. As a direct result of these efforts, the Office was able to strengthen bipartisan relationships with US lawmakers to safeguard Bermuda's interests and maintain strategic visibility. It provided valuable guidance on navigating shifts within the US administration and diligently monitored and advised on emerging US policies impacting Bermuda, including those related to taxation, digital assets, financial services, and trade.

The Office successfully facilitated high-level engagements for the Premier and Ministers to Washington, DC and Wyoming, coordinating meetings with members of Congress, federal agencies, and business leaders. It also actively promoted Bermuda's financial services, digital assets, and insurance and reinsurance sectors with targeted efforts to attract family offices and individuals of high net worth.

Additionally, the office highlighted Bermuda as a premier destination for tourism and business through dedicated industry engagement and spoke at leading US FinTech conferences to showcase Bermuda's regulatory leadership and innovation-friendly digital asset framework.

Lastly, the Office effectively advocated against US measures that could disrupt the Island's shipping and trade flows. For the same fiscal term, the DC Office partially met its key performance measures, demonstrating considerable progress. Regarding the objective of engaging with US organisations in the digital asset and FinTech industry to host at least one conference in Bermuda, the office held engaging discussions with several digital asset conference organisers and assisted partners in Bermuda in facilitating a digital asset conference now scheduled for May 2025.

Concerning the goal of securing three business leads resulting in meaningful engagement or progression in domiciling companies in Bermuda, the Office successfully drew the interest of four companies to begin the necessary actions to explore domiciling in Bermuda. Finally, for creating and maintaining an up-to-date database of Bermudian college students residing in the US, the Office, in conjunction with relevant ministries, developed a framework for a Bermuda College database with implementation sought for the upcoming fiscal term.

Looking ahead to the 2025/26 fiscal year, the planned objectives of the DC Office are concentrated in three key areas, US political and government engagement, business development, and the image and actions of the DC Office. The specific performance measures set for 2025/26 include engaging with US organisers in the digital asset and FinTech industry or in family offices that result in having at least one conference or event hosted in Bermuda. They also aim to secure three business leads resulting in meaningful engagement or progression in domiciling companies in Bermuda. Finally, the Office intends to finalise, implement, and maintain an up-to-date database of Bermudian college students residing in the United States.

#### Business Unit 19075, Brussels Office

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the mandate of the Brussels Office continues to be the maintenance of relationships with key stakeholders and decision makers in Brussels while establishing and maintaining connections.

The objectives of the Brussels Office for fiscal term 2024/25 remain as maintaining close dialogue with the European Commission, Council, and European Parliament and other EU institutions, facilitating access of the Premier and Ministers to key persons in upholding the Government's presence in Europe, and working in cohesion with the Ministry of Finance and the Bermuda Monetary Authority to support Bermuda's global position as a robust regulatory financial regime with a primary function to ensure continuous dialogue with the European Council.

#### Business Unit 19080, Office of the Head of the Public Service

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Office of the Head of the Public Service holds direct responsibility for all internal operations within the public service. Its primary objective is to transform and modernise the service with a substantial focus on training and development, customer service, and maintaining standards of excellence.

This office's comprehensive mandate covers the full spectrum of public service management. This unit spearheads government-wide reform initiatives such as the Public Service Strategic Plan 2024–2027. It ensures that all ministries and departments adhere to the core values of being customer-centric, future-focused, and committed to promoting prosperity. Upholding the highest standards of public service is central to its mission.

Mr. Chairman, a pivotal area of concentration is attracting, developing, and retaining top talent within the public service. Over the past year, significant progress has been made in advancing the Reimagining Careers in the Public Service initiative. This initiative addresses recruitment, retention, succession planning, and training needs.

The launch of a Public Service Career Guide accompanied efforts by public officers acting as ambassadors to promote careers in the service, raising awareness about the Career Guide, and generating interest in various training programmes designed to attract trainees and apprentices to both technical and professional roles such as marine pilots, maritime controllers, engineers, and a variety of industrial positions, including plumbers and electricians. These initiatives are further bolstered through formal learning agreements with signature schools and active participation in school career days and assemblies.

For current public officers, considerable emphasis has been placed on developing capacity at the executive leadership and mid-management levels. Over 20 public officers involved in the Leadership Development Programme have benefited from exposure to executive coaching and advanced policy development protocols via participation in the UAE Executive Leadership Programme, which included both remote and in-person learning components.

At the supervisory level, a tailored supervisory training programme was created and launched specifically for industrial employees to ensure they possess the necessary skills and knowledge to grow professionally and transition smoothly into supervisory roles.

Mr. Chairman, the dynamic interactions between the public service as an employer and its union partners have been strengthened through collaborative engagement and joint training on interest-based bargaining techniques. This initiative included all union partners and successfully commenced the negotiation season.

Joint negotiations resulted in a framework agreement for salary increases over a four-year period across all unions, followed by individual negotiations with each union to address non-financial clauses of our seven collective bargaining agreements, which is the current phase in progress.

While the standard cost-of-living increase has been awarded to ensure that government employees maintain purchasing power, which has been eroded over the years owing to austerity measures and salary freezes, the work with PwC on the modernisation of the Government Job Evaluation Initiative concluded with the delivery of an assessment on salary competitiveness when compared with market value based on similar positions in the private sector and in other jurisdictions, as well as the delivery of a new job evaluation tool. A job evaluation assesses a job's duties, responsibilities, required skills, and overall contribution to the delivery of public services. It helps to establish fair and equitable pay scales for the various roles.

Implementation planning to transition to the new job evaluation tool based on the PwC proposed competency-based model is now in progress. It is expected that the new tool and the new grading model will provide opportunities to address issues related to recruiting into hard-to-fill roles and the retention of top talent.

Mr. Chairman, increased efficiencies have been realised via operational changes to support recruitment. Managers have been trained to conduct their own recruitment efforts, as opposed to being completely reliant on the limited resources at the Department of Employee and Organisational Development. Further, steps have been taken to implement a more streamlined recruitment process, which is complemented by planned amendments to the Public Service Commission Regulations. Our commitment to enhancing the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the public service, ensuring it meets the evolving demands and expectations of both the workforce and the public.

Mr. Chairman, it is understood that effective communication is essential for good customer service. Therefore, the government website features a customer feedback form, now complemented by QR-coded posters providing access to the customer feedback form that are actively being placed in customer service areas. Responses to queries, complaints, and

compliments are managed in accordance with specific service standards.

Data is analysed to identify problem areas requiring added resources and/or corrective action to mitigate service issues and to ensure high quality and timely customer responses. While we are working toward meeting our response goals, plans include increased training in this area.

Mr. Chairman, the initiatives outlined demonstrate our unwavering commitment to fostering a modern, efficient, and responsive public service. By investing in our people, streamlining operations, and prioritising citizen engagement, we are building a public service that is well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of our country.

#### Business Unit 19085, PATI/PIPA Unit

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, next I will address business unit 19085, the PATI/PIPA Unit, where there was continued achievement of the established measures and its expenditures remain largely identical to last year's figures at \$862,000. The PATI/PIPA Unit is responsible for both the Public Access to Information Act 2010 and the Personal Information Protection Act 2016.

Mr. Chairman, for PATI, the unit continues to maintain and enhance the PATI Administrative Code of Practice, deliver targeted guidance to public authorities, and provide comprehensive information officer training. During 2024/25, the unit coordinated the update of the legislation and regulations and implemented significant updates to administrative procedures.

For PIPA, the unit continued to develop the government's privacy programme. This included delivering training, establishing documentation and templates, and advancing our international privacy recognition strategy. A key focus was coordinating readiness activities ahead of PIPA coming into force on 1 January 2025. Additionally, legislative activities supported the transition of personal information requests from PATI to PIPA and the harmonisation of the Electronic Transaction Act (ETA) with PIPA.

Mr. Chairman, as this Honourable [Senate] is aware, the Government's operations require interaction with the public and international partners, involving information exchange through both traditional and digital channels. This reality underscores the importance of embedding information rights and privacy principles throughout our operations.

Mr. Chairman, as we continue to manage and refine the PATI framework, we envision a future where access to information facilitates greater civic participation, supports evidence-based policy development, and contributes to Bermuda's standing as a modern, well-governed jurisdiction. The journey toward fully-realised information access requires sustained effort from all stakeholders, public authorities working towards proactive disclosure and improved disclosure practices,

residents engaging thoughtfully with the information, and the PATI/PIPA Unit providing guidance to navigate complex information ecosystems.

While challenges remain in balancing transparency with other important considerations, such as privacy and security, the pursuit of these principles offer potential benefits for Government effectiveness, civic engagement, and jurisdictional reputation that extend well beyond mere regulatory compliance.

Mr. Chairman, like the evolution of PATI, the Government also promotes the premise that privacy protection is not a destination, but rather a continuing journey that requires ongoing attention and adaptation. As processes change, technology evolves, and new privacy challenges emerge. The Government's privacy programme will continue to mature and develop. This evolutionary approach benefits both individuals and the Government. Through consistent application of privacy principles and regular programme assessment, the Government strengthens its ability to deliver services effectively while protecting the fundamental right to privacy.

Mr. Chairman, the Government's PIPA experiences may be seen as similar to other organisations across Bermuda as they operationalise privacy protection while honouring individuals' privacy rights. The foundational privacy principles that underlie PIPA are as follows:

- Lawfulness, fairness, and transparency in the handling of personal information.
- Purpose limitation to ensure information is only used for specified purposes.
- Proportionality or minimisation to ensure collection and use is adequate but not excessive.
- Accuracy and integrity of personal information. Appropriate retention periods.
- Security safeguards against risks.
- Controls on transfers of personal information.
- Accountability of organisations for compliance.

These principles work together to protect individual privacy rights while enabling the effective and legitimate use of personal information within organisations.

Mr. Chairman, looking ahead to 2025/26, the unit's priority activities will encompass refinement of their organisational structure to optimise service delivery, implementation of necessary legislative updates and compliance measures, development of strategic and operational frameworks to support PATI and PIPA requirements, continued enhancement of guidance materials and templates, ongoing support to public authorities in meeting their statutory obligations, strengthening relationships with regulatory authorities, expansion of training and awareness initiatives, and enabling recognition of comparable jurisdictions.

Mr. Chairman, with PIPA now fully operational as of January 1, 2025, its impact extends across the entire jurisdiction. While the Privacy Commissioner provides overarching guidance, the unit works in

collaboration with the regulator to enable international equivalence pursuits, elements that reach across the public and private sectors, and identification of certification mechanisms that might be used to demonstrate compliance.

Mr. Chairman, in today's interconnected digital economy, Bermuda's ability to participate in international data flows is not merely advantageous, it is essential for our jurisdiction's continued prosperity. Our businesses and government operations increasingly rely on cloud services and international data processing capabilities to deliver efficient, cost-effective services to our community. The PATI/PIPA Unit plays a crucial role in enabling these operations by working to establish privacy equivalency arrangements with key international partners. Our efforts towards privacy and data protection equivalence recognition, participation in certification programmes, and engagement with various jurisdictions demonstrate our commitment to meeting international standards. These initiatives are particularly vital as our jurisdiction navigates the complex requirements for international data transfers under PIPA section 15.

The Office of the Privacy Commissioner has communicated guidance to help organisations assess and document transfer impacts, implement appropriate safeguards and maintain compliance while leveraging modern technologies. This balanced approach ensures that Bermuda can benefit from global technological advances while maintaining appropriate protection for personal information regardless of where it is processed.

Mr. Chairman, effective records management forms the foundation of meaningful public access to information. During 2024/25, the Unit undertook significant work to develop the PATI Records Management Code of Practice, which will provide comprehensive guidance on how public authorities should create, maintain, and preserve official records. This code is essential for ensuring that public records remain accessible, authentic, and reliable throughout their life cycle.

Mr. Chairman, the Code looks to address challenges in digital record-keeping, including requirements for managing information across cloud platforms and collaborative systems. We have worked closely with the Archives, and the Code provides detailed guidance on managing hybrid paper and digital environments, ensuring consistent handling of records regardless of format. These improvements directly support public authorities in meeting their statutory obligations while promoting greater transparency and accountability in government operations. The effectiveness of PATI fundamentally depends on the government's ability to properly manage government records, and this Code of Practice provides the robust framework needed to support that goal.

Mr. Chairman, the PATI and PIPA legislations require far more than mere regulatory compliance.

These frameworks are fundamental pillars supporting Bermuda's position in the modern global economy.

PATI demonstrates our commitment to transparent and accountable governance. PIPA, in turn, establishes Bermuda as a jurisdiction that upholds international standards for personal information protection, a critical factor as data flows become increasingly central to worldwide commerce.

Mr. Chairman, the unit remains committed to supporting Bermuda's position as a trusted jurisdiction for information handling while ensuring effective protection of privacy rights. This work directly contributes to both our economic interests and the protection of individual rights.

#### Business Unit 19090, Digital Transformation

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, created in 2024, the Digital Transformation Team (DTT) is responsible for modernising how public services are designed, delivered and accessed in Bermuda. Its core mandate is to streamline Government operations through digitisation, with a focus on improving service delivery and enhancing the citizen experience and increasing operational efficiency.

The team leads the development of digital forms and low-code applications, supports departments in transitioning from manual to digital processes, and drives the adoption of user-centric platforms such as the One-Stop Shop. DTT also plays a key role in piloting artificial intelligence tools, such as chatbots and automated workflows, to ensure responsiveness and to reduce administrative burdens.

Working closely with client ministries and departments, the Department of Information and Digital Technologies, and other stakeholders, DTT ensures that digital initiatives are aligned with strategic priorities and delivered in a secure, coordinated, and scalable way.

Since its formation in the previous fiscal year, Mr. Chairman, the team has made significant progress in digital service delivery. Key accomplishments include developing and launching over 30 digital forms and applications to streamline service delivery across a wide range of public-facing and internal government functions. These include critical services such as Public Service Vehicle Licence and Accident Reporting at TCD, the Asthma Action Plan, and Financial Assistance Short-Term Relief. The team also built tools to support public engagement and transparency, such as the Dog Licence Lookup, Bermuda National Hero Nomination Form, and the Annual Occupational Safety Report. Internal Government processes were also digitised, including the new Cabinet Memo System, Privacy Registration Booking, and Feedback Form Enhancements. These forms collectively support operational improvements while also laying the groundwork for integrated, paperless public service delivery.

Launching the One-Stop Shop, which is a centralised portal, offering citizens seamless access to Government services via [forms.gov.bm](https://forms.gov.bm).

Development of the Social Insurance Site, a digitised suite of forms, including a real-time lookup tool for social insurance numbers, modernising access to critical benefits, and of course, reducing calls to the department.

Rollout of the Government Payment Portal, which enables secure online payments for Government services. This includes the parking tickets application, which allows the public to pay fines online. Ongoing development of the ShoreLink chatbot, an AI-driven tool designed to support digital customer service and provide automated responses to common queries. Continued work on digital literacy and public service upskilling, ensuring that Government employees are better equipped to use and manage digital tools.

Mr. Chairman, with the funding grants for fiscal year 2025/26, the Digital Transformation Team will focus on

- expanding the One-Stop Shop, adding new services and integrating a single sign-on solution to improve user experience;
- deploying the Unified Payment Platform, which is consolidating fragmented payment methods into one secure integrated system that connects with the E1 financial system;
- launching AI-driven [service] automation pilots and chatbot functionality to enhance customer service responsiveness;
- further digitising forms and services with the goal of reducing manual processes and improving turnaround time for both internal and public facing requests; and
- engaging a strategic partner within available budget constraints to support highly technical work, particularly for secure infrastructure development, payment platform integration and advanced AI implementations.

The strategic partner will provide specialised expertise to complement internal capabilities and accelerate delivery of complex initiatives. The team will continue to work in close collaboration with client departments, IDT, and external partners to ensure that digital investments produce lasting value for the public and the government.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my presentation on the budgets for the Cabinet Office, Head 9.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Junior Minister.  
Please proceed with the next head.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thank you. I'm just going to take a break for some water here.

Next up is Head 32.

## HEAD 32—DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to present the budget for Head 32, the Department of Planning, found on pages B-57 through B-61 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

The department's mission is straightforward and significant, *To ensure the sustainable management of Bermuda's natural and built environment.*

### Budget Overview

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, turning to page B-58, for the fiscal year 2025/26, the department has been allocated \$4.049 million, an increase of \$211,000, driven mainly by Government-wide salary increases.

### Revenue Outlook

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, turning to page B-59, the department expects to generate \$1.936 million in revenue, a 14 per cent increase over last year. This growth is driven by robust development activity across the residential, tourism, and commercial sectors.

Residential, tourism, and office development continues to be healthy, particularly within the high-end sector as evidenced by numerous applications for new residences, new blocks providing additional tourist units at Grotto Bay, and the Brookfield development on Front Street in the City of Hamilton.

Mr. Chairman, revenue changes include

- planning application fees which are down \$99,000 to \$550,000, reflecting caution in some segments;
- building permit fees are up \$110,000 to \$710,000 tied to sustained demand;
- planning searches are up \$84,000 to \$234,000 driven by strong real estate market; and
- elevator licences are up \$150,000 to \$350,000, which is a 75 per cent jump linked to high compliance and inspection demand.

### Subjective Analysis

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, subjective analysis of current account estimates of the department is found on page B-58. Salaries increased by \$96,000, which is 3 per cent, to \$3.447 million. Rentals increased by \$43,000, or 16 per cent, to \$318,000 due to the office move to 44 Church Street. Repairs and maintenance increased by \$69,000, or 51 per cent, to \$205,000 mostly for software and systems related to the new offices.

### Staffing and Recruitment

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, staffing challenges have impacted service delivery. Retirements and vacancies, including in enforcement and

inspections, left several units under-resourced. However, the department has responded decisively. They have recruited a new administrative officer, electrical inspector, enforcement officer, management accountant, and manager of administration during the last fiscal year, all of whom are Bermudian. [The department] promoted internally to fill senior roles [and] was successful in its nomination of a Bermudian student who received a bursary award in the last fiscal year targeted to the post of assistant planner to whom the department has provided and will continue to provide work experience to aid in his development.

[The department also] supports the youth employment programme of the Department of Workforce Development. The department will be providing work experience to a further three young Bermudians during this summer. In addition, the Department of Planning has featured at numerous school career days to promote planning as a profession to students and maintains just four work permit holders.

### Performance Measures by Business Unit

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the department has faced public frustration, particularly around delays in permits and application processing. These concerns are real and are not being ignored. In the coming weeks, I will be announcing initiatives either in train or under consideration to address the frustrations faced by both the Department of Planning and the public they serve.

#### Business Unit 42050, Enforcement

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 42050, Enforcement, page B-60. This business unit is responsible for investigating claims of breaches of planning control, seeking remedies for unauthorised development and carrying out planning searches. [In the past fiscal year]

- they processed 353 planning searches, an increase of 79, which is a 29 per cent increase;
- issued 11 civil penalties totalling \$275,000;
- eighty per cent of enforcement complaints were responded to within two weeks below the 100 per cent target. The department has adjusted its goal to 90 per cent for the upcoming fiscal year; and
- twenty-nine enforcement cases were opened last year.

Performance was impacted by staffing shortages, including a retirement and temporary reassignment. But with a new officer hired and the team now fully staffed, improvement is expected in 2025/26.

#### Business Unit 42050, Forward Planning

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 42060, Forward Planning, page B-60.

This business unit is responsible for the preparation of development plans and associated policies and guidance, including collating evidence through technical studies and surveys. For the fiscal year 2024/25, the department can report the following: The City of Hamilton Plan 2024, completed with no objections, a milestone achievement. As debated in these Chambers a week ago (in another place), the plan marks a shift from rigid controls to principle-based planning, encouraging investment and design flexibility.

#### Business Unit 42070, Development Management

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 42070, Development Management, page B-61.

This business unit is responsible for processing, planning and subdivision applications in accordance with the provisions of the relevant development plan and providing pre-consultation advice on development proposals. Highlights for 2024/25 are as follows:

- Processed 362 planning applications, nearly identical to the previous year.
- [Of these,] 61 per cent were completed within 12 weeks, below the 80 per cent target.
- Staffing shortages and increased workloads contributed to this issue, but targeted recruitment and reassignments are addressing the problem.

Most planning applications continue to be for residential development with a noticeable trend towards applications for creating additional dwelling units through internal conversions and the installation of solar panels.

Notable projects include the Grotto Bay Development, the North Arm in Dockyard, the replacement of the Belvedere Building on Pitts Bay Road and the proposed 94 key hotel at 11 Victoria Street, which was granted on appeal.

Significant pre-consultations for tourism development has been conducted at the St. Regis Bermuda Resort and regarding the redevelopment of the Elbow Beach Hotel.

#### Business Unit 42080, Building Permits

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 42080, Building Permits, found on page B-61.

This business unit is responsible for reviewing applications for building permits to ensure compliance with the building code, guaranteeing safe construction and protecting public welfare and well-being. For the fiscal year 2024/25, the department can report the following:

- They received 799 building permit applications and 456 permit revision applications.
- They issued 551 building permits and 368 permit revisions.

- These permits represented 21 per cent commercial, 24 per cent residential and 55 per cent minor works.

Notable projects that received building permits include:

- Southampton Princess Beach Club, a multi-story mixed-use development on Pitts Bay Road;
- the Brookfield Building; and
- further tourism development at Nautilus/Azura and Grotto Bay.

#### Business Unit 42090, Inspections

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 42090, Inspections, page B-61. This business unit is responsible for ensuring standards of construction in accordance with approved building permits and the relevant provisions of the building code.

For the fiscal year 2024/25, the department can report the following.

- They conducted over 6,395 inspections, including 504 elevators, 1,708 electrical and 4,183 building related.
- 664 commencement inspections indicate strong project starts.

#### Plans for the Year Ahead

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the department has a full slate of reforms and initiatives, including:

- New general development orders to reduce red tape and allow some changes of use without planning approval.
- Updated building code to raise construction standards and sustainability.
- Streamlining processes via better internal systems and more engagement with industry stakeholders.
- Launch of a digital platform to match underutilised land with prospective farmers, promoting local food production and land use efficiency.
- Vacant and derelict property database to encourage private investment in idle housing stock.
- Review of the listed building register to ensure that it is transparent, current, and fair.
- Policy research programmes underway focusing on housing, tourism, industrial land, and vacancy rates, forming the evidence base for the new Island-wide development plan.

Mr. Chairman, the Department of Planning is taking action. We are recruiting, reforming, digitising, and collaborating. This year's budget supports that work and it supports our broader goal, a planning system that is efficient, effective, and responsive to both the needs of developers and the rights of our residents. To the director, Victoria Cordeiro, and her team, thank

you for navigating the complexity with care and commitment. I look forward to sharing the progress that lies ahead. This concludes my comments on Head 32, Department of Planning, and I'll now proceed to Head 43, Information and Digital Technology.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Junior Minister. Please proceed when you're ready for Head 43.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thanks. I hope my single colleague across the aisle is ready for the final Head 43.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thanks. All right. That's good to hear.

### HEAD 43—DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, I rise to present the 2025/26 budget for Head 43, Department of Information and Digital Technologies (IDT) as outlined on pages B-62 through B-65 of the Budget Book.

IDT functions as the central nervous system of the government, enabling everything from front line public services to internal operations. The public rightly expects these systems to be reliable, secure, and resilient at all times. In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, meeting these expectations requires more than maintenance. It demands strategic investment, modern infrastructure, and forward-thinking leadership. This budget reflects that commitment, a deliberate shift towards stronger protection, smarter systems, and a government built for the future.

#### Budget Summary

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, the Department of Information and Digital Technologies has been allocated a total operating budget of \$9.211 million for the 2025/26 fiscal year, as shown on page B-62. This represents an increase of \$706,000, or 8 per cent, over the previous year's budget of \$8.505 million.

Mr. Chairman, a subjective analysis of current account estimates of the Department of Information and Digital Technologies can be found on page B-63. While the majority of new investment is reflected in capital expenditures, there are also key changes within the department's current account, particularly across three areas of strategic importance.

Communications, \$1.757 million, which is a 16 per cent increase, or \$242,000. This increase supports the expansion of the network data lines, ensuring sufficient bandwidth and infrastructure to meet the demands of a growing and digitally dependent Government.

Rentals, \$842,000, increased by \$182,000, or 28 per cent, which reflects the cost of relocating the department to a new premises with updated facilities better suited to IDT's operational needs.

And salaries, which has been allocated \$3.447 million, which is an increase of 3 per cent, or \$162,000. This covers Government-wide salary uplifts and funds the filling of a critical security analyst position, reinforcing our commitment to cybersecurity and digital service protection.

Mr. Chairman, the capital allocations for the Department of Information and Digital Technologies for 2025/26 is \$6.525 million, representing a 12 per cent increase over the previous year. These funds are not merely an investment in technology; they represent strategic steps towards a more resilient, efficient and responsive Government. As part of its ongoing commitment to digital transformation and secure service delivery, IDT will continue investing in modernising the network infrastructure and enhancing cybersecurity capabilities. These strategic initiatives are crucial for enabling a resilient, efficient, and data-driven Government.

Mr. Chairman, while some budget lines show reduced allocations, I want to be clear. These are not merely cutbacks; they are recalibrations. They reflect areas where previous investments have delivered, allowing us to redirect resources towards more urgent and transformational priorities.

Key areas of capital investment include:

- Network Upgrades, \$2.5 million. Replacing legacy network switches and upgrading infrastructure at Global House, implementing modern network monitoring tools, firewall enhancements, and unified communication systems, improving Wi-Fi reliability and connectivity across key facilities.
- Cybersecurity and Risk Management, \$930,000. Enhancing endpoint protection and real-time threat detection, supporting continuous monitoring, software licensing, and third-party penetration testing, strengthening Government's overall security posture.
- Government Portals and Digital Accessibility, \$505,000. Improving access to public services through a more integrated and user-friendly platform, supporting transparency, engagement, and efficiency.
- E-Government Initiatives, \$545,000. Focused on data centralisation, performance analytics, and smarter governance, reduced slightly to reflect consolidation with broader data infrastructure work, disaster recovery and continuity.
- The iSeries System, \$295,000. Following a major refresh last year, this year's focus shifts to fine-tuning disaster recovery environments.
- Wintel Systems, \$950,000, which is a \$650,000 reduction, supporting secure cloud

transitions, identity management and continuity testing, innovation and hardware life cycles.

- Innovation and Hardware Life Cycle Development Projects, \$400,000. Sustaining innovation while streamlining focus on core initiatives.
- Infrastructure Computers, \$400,000. Reflects recent hardware modernisation and more efficient procurement planning, data infrastructure, establishing a centralised government data lake to power business intelligence, support evidence-based policy, and foster greater transparency and innovation across the public service.

Mr. Chairman, these investments mark a shift from reactive maintenance to proactive transformation that will strengthen our digital foundation, protect public assets, and enhance service delivery across every corner of Government.

#### Workforce and Recruitment

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Workforce and Recruitment found on page B-63.

Mr. Chairman, staffing stands at 50 FTEs (full-time equivalent employees), up by one. But we have 10 funded vacancies and filling them is essential. To that end, IDT has been working with the DEOD on recruitment. These include a chief systems engineer for the Wintel Systems, a security manager, a network engineer, four systems engineers, a security analyst, a support analyst, and an operations analyst. We are addressing recruitment challenges head-on through a new apprenticeship programme, building a pipeline of young Bermudians, IT professionals, to meet not just IDT's needs, but also Bermuda's digital future.

#### Output Measures

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Output Measures, pages B-64 and B-65.

Mr. Chairman, I will state up front that not all service targets were met. The team worked under pressure to manage a post-attack backlog while pushing forward critical upgrades.

#### Business Unit 53030, Device Support

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Performances this year, business unit 53030 Device Support—70 per cent of tickets resolved within targets, below the 90 per cent goal, but improving.

#### Business Unit 53035, Network Support

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 53035, Network Support, met 75 per cent target rising to 85 per cent this year.

#### Business Unit 53040, Service Support

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 53040, Service Support, held steady at 25 per cent first-call resolution.

#### Business Unit 53060, Business System Support

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit, 53060 Business System Support, achieved 70 per cent of the monthly review meetings; target is now 90 per cent.

#### Business Unit 53090, Security

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Business unit 53090, Security, delivered on its 100 per cent goal, a critical win.

#### Projects in 2024/25

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, despite challenges, IDT made real strides. Microsoft 365 was deployed government-wide for more secure collaborative work. Infrastructure renewal is underway, improving system speed, uptime and resilience.

Network hardware replaced at critical sites, including the airport and Government Administration Building. Unified communications project completed at 95 per cent. Streamlining systems and lowering costs. The iSeries refresh is completed, ensuring core financial systems remain stable and secure.

#### Plans for the Upcoming Year

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Mr. Chairman, IDT's 2025 business plan will focus on three pillars.

1. Strengthening cybersecurity, disaster recovery and incident response. IDT's top priority is protecting government systems, data and users through a proactive layered cybersecurity approach. Key initiatives include:
  - a) advanced endpoint protection: state-of-the-art tools to secure all government connected devices;
  - b) 24/7 threat monitoring: constant surveillance to detect and respond to suspicious activity in real time;
  - c) vulnerability assessments and penetration testing: regular system reviews to identify and fix weaknesses before they are exploited;
  - d) email threat detection: intelligent solutions to prevent phishing and email-borne attacks;
  - e) cybersecurity awareness training: educating public officers to serve as the first line of defence; and
  - f) updated disaster recovery and incident response plans ensuring business continuity and fast recovery during disruptions.
2. Delivering high performance, scalable and resilient IT infrastructure. To support the

government's growth and service expectations, IDT is modernising its core infrastructure with a focus on speed, stability and long-term reliability. Planned efforts include:

- a) replacing legacy hardware: phasing out outdated systems to reduce failure risk and increasing performance
  - b) application consolidation: eliminating redundant software to streamline processes and lower costs
  - c) rewiring Global House: a critical upgrade to boost connectivity and improve network stability and prepare for future needs
3. Supporting data-driven decision-making. IDT is investing in tools that enable departments to transform data into insights and actionable outcomes. Key outcomes targeted are:
- a) real-time operational insights for faster and smarter responses
  - b) identifying trends and opportunities to inform long-term planning, and
  - c) evidence-based decision across government.

This will be enabled by user-friendly dashboards and clear comprehensive reporting tools to empower every department to measure, manage and improve performance.

Closing thoughts: Mr. Chairman, IDT is not simply reacting to a crisis. They are using it as a catalyst for transformation. This budget represents a strategic shift away from patchwork fixes and toward a coherent, protected and people-centred digital government. To the Acting Chief Information Officer, Gina Benjamin, and the IDT team, I thank you. Your resolve in the face of unprecedented challenges has kept the government running and allowed us to rebuild stronger. With this budget, we don't just recover, we leap forward.

This concludes my comments on Head 43, Information and Digital Technology.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Fubler.

Would any Senator care to speak on Heads 9, 32 or 43?

I see Senator Cunningham's hand up first.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would propose that we go by head.

**The Chairman:** Senator Fubler, is that fine if we go head by head?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I mean we have considerable time. Dealer's choice.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Okay, Well, I will start at the top and we will see where we get to.

Okay. Thank you very much for that comprehensive brief. Obviously three very different reports there. But thank you. I just want to delve into a few things a little further.

Firstly, on page B-40 the Economic Policy and Foreign Affairs Unit where you have got the London, Washington, DC, and Brussels Offices. I have a question actually related to I guess page B-43 with the DC Office that is looking at maintaining a database of Bermudian college students residing in the US.

My question is, why are we just worried about Bermudian students in the US? And I get those issues right now with students. But if we are building a database, why would we not think about Canada, UK and other jurisdictions.

**The Chairman:** Senator Fubler, would you like to . . .

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Oh, so if we go question for question that is fine. I think it is in working with implementing new systems. I think it is often best practice to take an iterative approach to implementing them. So, we are trialling this with the DC Office. And I assume we will continue to look to implement that in other jurisdictions as well.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** And then, on the London Office. I guess as a performance measure, do we know how many inquiries they have had from Bermudians who have relocated to the UK about, I guess it is not visa issues but issues that they might be having when they are there. Or students.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** If you would like to present additional questions while I wait for responses from the technical officers on that one you . . . are looking for specific numbers of . . .

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Just, I mean, is it a small amount or is it in the hundreds?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay, like the order of magnitude . . .

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** More to give us an idea of . . . Yes.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay. And specifically, around people reaching out to the London Office who are moving from Bermuda to the London Office or all of their interactions with . . .

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** I guess the London Office interactions with any Bermudians in the UK. So, it could be students as well.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay. All right. We have got that one down and do you have any more?

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** No . . . yes.

Then, back on the DC Office. On page B-43 you talk about being collaborative with US policymakers and the sort. Do they collaborate with ABIR, the Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers who have a policymaking function within the Bermuda market? I guess that would be a yes or no answer.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay. That is a good question.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** I think that is it for the Economic Policy.

Moving on to the Digital Transformation line. So, we see obviously the . . . you are saying that it was started last year coming on board. And I think you explained that the professionals . . . that there are no employees in that unit. And they are all going to be under the Professional Services line. But my question then would be if . . . what role will . . . or how will the Cabinet Office determine or measure effectiveness of any initiatives when managing the funds without dedicated staff? Because I also do not see any performance measures related to it.

And I get that it is a new unit. But I would think if there were a line item and a budget there should be a corresponding performance measure. But how are we going to be able to measure that effectiveness if there are not dedicated staff and they are all consultants?

And then again on page B-40, the Policy and Strategy unit, 19015, what was the reason for the increase we are seeing, the 36 per cent, under the general header? I do not think I heard it. Policy and Strategy, 19015, is going from \$527,000 . . . sorry, \$666,000 to \$907,000, an increase of \$241[,000].

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay. Any others?

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Yes.

So back to the Digital Transformation. Sorry, we are flipping around. So, we have the Digital Transformation line. We have obviously different ministries and departments who are going through fairly sizable transformation projects. Immigration is one that comes to mind. Will the Cabinet Office be coordinating those efforts to ensure that there is no duplication and to ensure that there is a unified strategy? Is that management going to come from this unit?

Still on digitisation, do you think the current funding is adequate to sustain all of the efforts that are out there, any new projects? And what happens to their contingency plans if unexpected costs arise or the project requires any scaling or kind of moving out?

And then a final one on digitisation is, How is the Government balancing the digitisation with cybersecurity needs across ministries especially as now the services, more services, are going to becoming accessible online?

And then a final question, if I may on Head 9, Mr. Chairman.

**The Chairman:** Please proceed, yes.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** To do with the Safety and Health.

So, page B-40, line 19020 under Government Reform. I understand that Health has the Occupational Safety and Health for private external and then this Safety and Health Department is for internal government health. I note that there are one or two . . . there is one full-time employee. Do you think that is enough for the audits that they are supposed to be undertaking annually? Should there be more. . . I mean, ultimately, this our public service, so we have a duty of care. The Government owes them a duty of care.

But I just also wanted to know the metric of the third measure on page B-43. The level of completion of workplace and building inspections. I am guessing that is the number. And are the public sector workplaces evaluated to the same standard as the private sector?

**The Chairman:** Senator Cunningham,—

*[Crosstalk]*

**The Chairman:** I am sorry, was that the last question?

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** That was the last question in Head 9.

**The Chairman:** Would any other Senator like to ask a question on Head 9?

I see Senator Tannock standing up.  
Senator.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Yes, thank you Mr. Chairman.

My question on Head 9 relates to 19075, page B-44, and that is in relation to the performance metrics of the Brussels Office. I note that it says the measure indicated is to provide policy advice to the Government of Bermuda on relevant developments within the European Union and member states. And the actual outcome is 100 per cent. And it is 100 per cent across the board. Can you tell me how that 100 per cent is calculated? That is under Head 9.

I do have further questions, but under different heads.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I am happy to take questions across all heads as we continue to compile responses with the technical officers.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Okay, thank you.

My next question comes under Head 32, page B-61, under the Department of Planning. And it is with regard to the four performance measures under 42080, Building Permits. When I look at the four areas of

permits, there was a noticeable dip in the original forecast for 2024/25 and the revised forecast. So, for instance, the number of residential building permit applications reviewed, and percentage processed within six weeks of registration. The original forecast was 70 per cent. The revised forecast is now 42 per cent.

For the number of commercial building permit applications reviewed and percentage processed within eight weeks, the original forecast was 70 per cent. It is now 68 [per cent]. For the number of building revisions reviewed and percentage process within 10 working days, the original forecast was 70 [per cent], it is now 35 per cent. And for the number of permitted development permits, minor works reviewed and percentage processed within 10 working days following receipt, it was forecast to be 70 per cent and now it is 68 [per cent], which is not such a large gap.

But then I go to the target outcome for 2025/26, and I see that we are projecting to go back to the 70 per cent. So, my first question is why was there a dip in the amount processed? And my second question is, How do you intend to achieve higher percentages? Was it a staffing issue? Was it a backlog? So, just why was there a dip and how will we get to the forecasted numbers?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I can actually provide a response to that one. That was captured in the brief. The Planning Department did state that they were experiencing some staffing challenges that have now been resolved. They are back up to a full complement.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Just in case your officers are actually looking at that, alongside that, because it is split by residential and commercial, my question would be, is there . . . it looks like there are obviously more residential permits than commercial so you would almost expect that more commercials are going to get reviewed and processed. But is there more of a priority on commercial versus residential? Or is it just as they come? How do they prioritise which permit applications they are going to work on?

**The Chairman:** Would any other Senator care to ask a question.

Senator Tannock.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Yes, I do have one final question and that is under Head 43, Information and Digital Technologies.

This question is related to 53996, cyber incident 2023. It is simply to say that I note that amount for 2023/24 that is \$1,323,000, and then I see zeroes going across. So, I would assume that is because we have decided that we have rectified that and no longer need to address the ramifications of that incident.

However, my concern is that when I look through the rest of Head 43, and when I look through the performance measures I do not see anything

related to cybersecurity. So, my natural inclination would be to think it is under National Security . . . sorry, Defence.

However, when I looked under the performance metrics of Defence there is nothing listed there. And with the Cybersecurity Act [2024] passing in the House in May 2024, I would have expected to see, and with the Cybersecurity Advisory Board, which is comprised of the Chief Information Technology Officer and the Chief, I guess, Cybersecurity Officer, I would have expected to see somewhere within those two budgets a provision for the plan for the cybersecurity.

So, I just wanted to know, given that we have passed this legislation and given that it is supposed to comprise of heads of both ministries, why is it not encapsulated in either of these performance measures for either of these . . . either ministries or departments?

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Tannock.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** I have no further questions. Thank you.

**The Chairman:** No further questions. Okay. Thank you.

Senator Cunningham.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Sorry, I may have said a mistruth when I [said I] was done with the Cabinet Office. I have one further question so far on page C-9 for the Capital Account Estimates. We are looking at \$500,000 for the cooperative food supply. I just wanted to know if the Junior Minister could point me to where that fits within the department objectives of the Cabinet Office which are listed on page B-39?

And then moving on to Head 32 and the Department of Planning. You mentioned that the team is now fully staffed. Is that as of 1 April, at the beginning of this budget year? And I did note that Front Desk Operation had dropped but is now back. So, I guess maybe there was a blip in that and now it's back up fully operational.

Then moving on . . . on page B-60, on business unit 42060, Forward Planning, halfway down the page there is reference to the completion of an annual housing land audit, which is at 100 per cent. That was a very interesting read as I was doing my review of this. I took a read of that. And so, I think my question to do with this is, What systems are in place to ensure the ongoing monitoring of housing trends and how frequently will the future audits be conducted to inform those policy decisions?

And from that report they found that there were 236 uninhabitable structures identified in 2023. And the Junior Minister mentioned a vacant and derelict . . . let me see exactly what he said, there was something coming on board for a vacant land review of . . . a vacant property database. So, I assume that those will be included in there. Is there a difference between vacant

and derelict? Well, I know there is a difference, but what is the difference from that standpoint? Sorry.

And then, Mr. Chairman, What measures are being taken by the Department of Planning to encourage more new builds, especially maybe in some of the underutilised parishes (although you could argue that not many of them are underutilised), but maybe financial or regulatory incentives for new builds over additions and conversions? So, there being a difference between that.

And then again, with the uninhabitable properties, what would the department's plan be for the 236 uninhabitable properties in residential one and two zones?

And I don't know if this would be relevant to this department, but what is being done to resolve title disputes and absentee ownership issues? I think, and I have to say I've watched programmes on the €1 or €10 houses in Italy and sales. And I think encouraging people to invest in some of this housing stock could lead to less of the stalling of the housing supply.

Still on this, moving to the . . . well, I guess in line with the question from my colleague, Senator Tannock. She was talking about [business unit] 42080 on page B-61 with the building permits and there being a big difference. From a resource perspective, do we allocate more resources to the residential applications than the commercial? Because I assume there are a lot more residential, probably by almost half. And how is the department split between residential and commercial development, especially when we are looking at potentially needing a lot more residential units?

And I believe that is the end of my questions. Oh . . . yes, that's the end of my questions for Head 32, Department of Planning.

**The Chairman:** Junior Minister Fubler, how would you like to proceed?

Would you like to—

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I think I have some responses ready. If we'd like to do that, I'm going to look at the time. Yeah, we got lots of time.

Okay, and so I'll start with an easy one. Yes, the DC Office does collaborate with ABIR. There you go.

And regarding digital transformation, will the Cabinet Office be coordinating efforts that are taking place in other ministries and departments like what's going on in Immigration? And for that response, the Ministry of Economy and Labour is leading the immigration digitisation initiatives.

And next up, what happens if additional costs arise in digital transformation work? How will those be handled? The Ministry intends to adhere to the allocated budget. If additional funding is essential, it will be requested in accordance with normal procedures. As an example, requesting additional funding at the mid-year budget review, potentially.

And next question I had from Senator Cunningham was how will security be handled as projects develop? The Department of Digital Transformation is working closely with IDT, PIPA, and National Security on cybersecurity needs to ensure that projects align with industry standards and best practices.

There was another question from Senator Cunningham around safety and health. Health has an Occupational Safety and Health for external versus internal . . . one full-time employee, do you think that is enough? Should there be more? We have a duty of care, the metric of inspections . . . are the public sector workplaces evaluated to the same standard? And so, the response here, the Department of Health is the regulator for the country. They oversee both the private and public sectors equally. The Cabinet Office Occupational Safety and Health Office fulfils the obligations of the government as an employer. The metric for all employers needs to be queried of the Department of Health as it isn't controlled by the Cabinet Office.

And then moving on to some of the questions posed by Senator Tannock . . . still waiting on the Brussels Office metrics. But for planning, I think I gave the response here, the reason for the dip was the staffing challenges and we intend to achieve forecasted 70 per cent by a combination of hiring consultants and reforming the process.

And they also asked . . . I'm taking this from Senator Cunningham, looks like there's more residential than commercial requests, maybe vice versa, but is there more priority and how do we prioritise which applications are addressed first? And the response here is that applications are not prioritised based on whether they are residential or commercial. Applications are processed in the order they are received. The exception for this is for projects of national importance such as a government project serving a broader community economic need or a permit associated with the north arm dock repairs and dockyard for the purposes of berthing marine and ports tugboats as an example.

I imagine some of the discrepancy in the rates there is that for the residential there may be less experience in the submission of the applications and so it's more difficult to process those as they need more back and forth.

And Head 43, the cyber incident. We can work with the Ministry of National Security who should be capturing these performance measures. Thanks for calling that out.

And then Senator Cunningham had a question about Head 32. Is the team fully staffed? The front-end desk is fully operational. The department is not fully staffed. The enforcement team is currently fully staffed. However, there are vacant posts in other sections for which recruitment is ongoing. For example, a vacant planner post in the development management section, the section that processes planning applications and there's a vacant building inspector post.

Also, some questions around the measurements for National Security from Senator Tannock. If you turn to Head 83, business unit 93007, disaster risk and reduction mitigation can be found there.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Page B-265, Disaster Risk Reduce and Mitigation, [there was] an increase of 122 per cent this year, which is \$422,000, the allocation for this year. Although, I don't know if I'm supposed to be speaking to other heads outside of my remit.

Okay. Senator Cunningham had a question around Head 32, page B-60, the business unit [for] Forward Planning, referencing completion of the housing land audit. What systems are in place to ensure monitoring of housing trends? Performance measures indicate these are annual, and the department has been achieving these targets.

There was a question regarding the vacant and derelict property database. What's the difference? The data for the vacant and derelict properties project is taken from the records of the Department of Land Valuations, namely, those properties which have been identified as uninhabitable. The project does not differentiate between vacant and derelict properties. So, there you go. They're kind of the same. Okay.

And then, Head 32, what's been done to encourage new builds over additions and conversions? And the response is that the vacant and derelict properties project is the first step towards the department identifying development opportunity sites which will encourage development of brownfield, i.e., previously developed sites, which I think is the more environmentally sustainable option as opposed to new build. That's definitely my preference if we have to choose between the two.

And then what's being done with absentee ownership? This is not an issue for the department to resolve. Ownership details are not a relevant consideration for planning decisions. Planning permission runs with the land, not the owner.

And also from Head 32, Senator Cunningham, do we allocate more resources to residential building permit applications? How is the department split between residential and commercial development given that we need many more residential units? This was answered above somewhat, given the approach of assessing in the order received. However, in the near future, announcements will be made in respect of improving processing and refined requirements for submissions.

Far too many incomplete applications have been taking excessive lengths of time for officers to review and chase missing information. I think I alluded to this with the residential, especially. You are probably working with someone who's maybe less experienced or a smaller office, the chance of an incomplete submission is higher. This cannot continue—chasing the

missing information. And so, the department will be more strict in enforcing complete applications. The department is currently in the midst of meeting with key stakeholder groups to discuss the plan changes to obtain critical feedback before going live with the new initiative.

I'm just scrolling back through some of the other questions. I think I already gave a response to around why we are only tracking the US college students to start. We are going to pilot it first and make sure we iron out the kinks before we expand to other jurisdictions.

The next question you had around the London Office and its interactions. The London Office maintains a data log of all incidents relating to counsellor matters to support Bermudians in the UK living, studying or travelling. These incidents extend beyond the UK and can be global at times. In some instances, we are working with UK and Bermuda authorities as required. And I assume . . . hold on one second.

Okay. And so, moving on, how will the Cabinet Office measure effectiveness without dedicated staff where overseas offices hire consultants? Consultants have reporting lines and deliverables under their contracts. Those are measured in similar ways to public officers. London Office staff are public officers. I guess in the Brussels Office instance, that's a consultant. But they report in to public officers. And so, there's performance review conducted there as part of the contract.

What else do we have? Oh . . . and so your question around Head 9, the \$500,000 for the co-ops, where does that fit into the objectives on B-39? This one is close to my heart. I am a big fan of collective economics and I would argue that objective five, *ensuring implementation of government reform priorities* captures that objective. Maybe we get creative sometimes to ensure that we implement the initiatives we campaigned on.

Going forward . . . what else do we have here? I think there's one or two that I'm still awaiting responses on.

Mr. Chairman, if you would like to solicit any additional questions there might be, I think we have 20 or 19 more minutes.

**The Chairman:** We don't necessarily have to use that 19 or 20 minutes.

*[Laughter]*

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Sure. After yesterday where we unfortunately ran a little bit short of time, based on the approach to delivering the questions, I am happy to accommodate. Maybe now is my colleague's chance to pontificate a bit while delivering the questions.

**The Chairman:** I think Senator Cunningham does have a further question.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** I am not a pontificator.

[Laughter]

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Although I could do because I am now about to talk about security.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Ah.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** So, page B-62 on IDT, I was not going to speak about the cyber incident, but I am going to talk about security.

The original 2024/25 security budget of \$520[,000] was reduced to \$177[,000], which is a 66 per cent cut. And now we are still seeing a decrease at \$347[,000] when . . . and so I'm asking, Why is that when your first department objective is enhanced security measures? So, I just . . . since it's such an important part of the department, I found that a little odd.

And just interestingly, and obviously you talked about the apprenticeship programme and the vacant positions in like security analysts, systems analysts, whatever, what qualifications or certifications would be required for those security staff personnel? And how is the Government ensuring that they can give the training needed for those individuals, or are we going overseas?

Actually, [I have] another question for you, because you did mention the work permits and planning, How many work permits are in the IDT department? Given that it is like planning, there are some specialist roles and responsibilities, but how are we ensuring that we're training Bermudians in these CISO roles?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay, and so the first one around security is a little bit on the asked-and-answered, . . . I think, right? We have identified the Ministry of National Security as the primary spot for tracking and funding the data security function. And as for the requirements for the job roles, I encourage not just my colleagues here, but everyone who may be interested in providing public service and has the relevant skill set to take a look at the Bermuda jobs board or the government employee posting for the specifics. And then I think also, without revisiting debate, I did provide a statement on that apprenticeship initiative wherein the apprentices will do kind of a round-robin through different departments, and the plan is to expand that programme to also accommodate the students completing the relevant certifications for the various roles.

But speaking from my kind of private work experience, it can be rather challenging to fill roles. We have been trying to hire some software developers for the team, and it has been something we have been working on for the better part of the year actually—quite a lot of interviews. There is significant demand in these roles, you're right. But I think we are continuing the pursuit of filling them because they are essential and the

recent uplifts in salary and increases in allocated head-count help in that regard.

**The Chairman:** Senator Cunningham, a further question?

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Okay, so cybersecurity is now under National Security.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Correct. And then there are also several other initiatives that complement the security like replacing legacy equipment and upgrading firewalls as well as the enhanced focus on end-user training because those in cybersecurity or information security will know the weakest link is always the person in the chair, not necessarily the computer.

At this time, if you are happy, I think I have a couple more responses.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Mm-hmm.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** How many work permits are in the IDT department? I would say . . . don't quote me on this, but they are going to do that. As the technical officer says, they are unaware of anyone on a work permit. There is an entirely Bermudian team in IDT with the full-time employees, which is commendable.

Sorry, I yield again. You were going to ask another question?

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Yes, I was talking about cybersecurity coming now [under] National Security rather than IDT. But if there is another security breach, then we still need the backup servers and off-site backups and disaster recovery systems and all the rest of it. That still lies with IDT. Right?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** It is indeed a collaborative approach. The responsibility is a National Security initiative, but they are IT systems.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** So that is where the—

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** You saw the increase in head-count in that space as well.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Right, at the back of the [Budget] Book, page C-whatever it was. The acquisitions have . . . and that is where that is. So it is funding. Okay.

Then, I think one of my final questions is the last performance measure, page B-65 under Security, business unit 53090, where it says *conduct quarterly security awareness training*. And we have a revised—well, so I guess it is new this year—90 per cent target and a target next year of 90 per cent. As you have just said, the person behind the keyboard is the first line of

defence. It is a Bermuda rumour that the hack may or may not have occurred from someone opening a malicious link or attachment from an email. I think that that number should be 100 [per cent]. I think everyone should be subject to quarterly training.

Also, my second question to that is, What are the ramifications for failing that training?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay, and so quarterly security awareness training—everyone completing it quarterly, I think, again, taking off my—

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Or maybe half-yearly.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** —government . . . no, it's quarterly. We are working in a regulated industry in finance, and we are compelling users to complete the training quarterly to maintain our compliance.

But you know, sometimes somebody's on extended leave, or they're sick, or there is a critical project that causes them to complete it into the early days of the subsequent quarter, right?, like things happen. And so, 90 per cent is an achievable goal, call back to the S.M.A.R.T. goals that you have been calling for. And so, yes, ideally, 100 per cent of the people will complete the quarterly security access training.

I can endeavour to confirm the kind of methodology from my experience. It's typically reviewing some kind of content on a website and the like, and so as long as they are doing the quiz and watching the videos . . . I think we are going to meet the metric there, and then it gives an opportunity to exceed the goal.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** And what about the ramifications if they fail it?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** That I will need to consult with the technical officers on. That's more of an operational question, though. Right? And so, I have no oversight over specifically that. Oh, yes, I have a response. You are locked out of the system if you do not complete your training. There you go. So, they cannot present the risk.

And then also, I don't want to [raise a] point of order (that feels a little too combative in this case), but we do not deal in rumour here in the Senate. And so, I will not make comment on that.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Fair enough. We will wait for that long-awaited report.

Mr. Chairman, that ends my questions.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

This seems like a good time to ask Senator Fubler to move the heads. But first of all, I just want to thank him very much for his brief presentation. And also thank you very much for allowing so much time for Senators to ask their questions. This has, I think, for everybody in this room, and for the listening audience, been

a very, very useful session. So, thank you very much for that.

Now I'm going to ask you to move the heads.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Sure thing, Mr. Chairman.

I move that Heads 9, 32, and 43 be approved as printed.

**The Chairman:** Thank you, Senator Fubler.

Is there any objection to the moving of those three heads?

Hearing none, we can agree to move them. Thank you.

*[Motion carried: The Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation, Heads 9, 32, and 43 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2025/26.]*

*[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Okay, Mr. Chairman, that concludes the debate as it pertains to the scheduled heads. I now move that the following heads be approved as printed.

- Non-Ministry Departments—Heads 1, 2, 5, 56, 63, 85, 92, 98, and 101;
- Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation—Heads 13, 18, 51, 61 and 80;
- Ministry of Justice—Heads 4 and 75;
- Ministry of Finance—Heads 12, 28, 39 and 49;
- Ministry of Education—Head 41;
- Ministry of Economy and Labour—Heads 29 and 94;
- Ministry of Public Works and Environment—Heads 36, 68, 79, 81 and 82;
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport—Heads 48 and 52;
- Ministry of National Security—Heads 6, 12 and 45; and
- Ministry of Housing and Municipalities—Heads 90 and 53.

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

Is there any objection to the moving of those heads?

No objection. So those heads are now moved. Thank you, Minister Crystal Caesar.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you. I have a bit more.

**The Chairman:** More—

*[Laughter]*

**The Chairman:** I'm sorry.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Mr. Chairman, I move that the Capital Account Estimates be approved and stand as part of the Bill.

I move that clauses 1 through 6 of the Bill together with Schedules A through C, inclusive, be approved and stand as part of the Bill.

I move that the preamble be approved.

I move that the title stand as part of the Bill.

I move that the Report of the Committee on the Bill entitled the Appropriation Act 2025 be adopted by the Senate.

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

Is there any objection to the movement of those items that she just referenced?

Hearing none, we can consider those moved.

Thank you, Minister Caesar.

*[Motion carried: The Appropriation Act 2025, along with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the financial year 2025/26 were considered by a Committee of the whole Senate and passed without amendment.]*

**The Chairman:** So, we can let out of Committee now. And for the last time this week, the seat goes back to Madam President. Thank you all.

*[Pause]*

**Senate resumed at 7:00 pm**

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

## REPORT OF COMMITTEE

### APPROPRIATION ACT 2025

#### ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2025/26

**The President:** Senators, the Report of the Committee has been received. And do you give approval for it to be adopted?

Yes. Good. So, the report has been adopted.

And I would like to take this opportunity to thank Vice President John Wight and Senator Tawana Tannock for chairing the Committees, the Appropriation Act this week. You have both done a stellar job. And I also thank all Senators who have participated. I think it's been a very busy week, but it's been a very effective week. So, thank you all for that.

We will now move on then with the rest of the agenda. I will just . . .

*[Crosstalk]*

**The President:** I thought you did this . . . we did not do it?

*[Pause and crosstalk]*

**The President:** We need to do the third reading and pass.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President.

I move that the Bill be now read the third time.

**The President:** Is there any objection to the third reading?

No objection.

## BILL

### THIRD READING

#### APPROPRIATION ACT 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** I move that the Bill entitled the Appropriation Act 2025 do now pass.

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

No objection. The Bill has passed.

*[Motion carried: The Appropriation Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]*

**The President:** Thank you very much, Minister Crystal Caesar, spokesperson for Finance [in the Senate]. You have done a very good job today.

So, Senators, we will move on then with our agenda. We have other Bills to consider. Item No. 2 on our Orders of the Day is consideration of the Government Fees Amendment Regulations 2025.

And that is in the name of Senator the Honourable Crystal Caesar, spokesperson for Finance [in the Senate]. So, you have—

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I move that the Senate do take under consideration the [Government Fees Amendment Regulations 2025](#) proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 2 of the Government Fees Act 1965.

**The President:** Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

## DRAFT REGULATIONS

### GOVERNMENT FEES AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, in the Pre-Budget Report tabled in another place in December, a number of tax reductions were outlined that were under consideration to ease the tax burden faced by residents and businesses. This Government has a history of ensuring that better fiscal performance results in meaningful relief for taxpayers.

Madam President, I now bring to this Honourable [Senate] one of the fee reductions promised within the Pre-Budget Report and the 2025 Budget Statement. Madam President, as stated in the 2025 Budget Statement, access to communication is essential for work, for education, for staying connected with loved ones. To ease the financial burden of mobile services, the Government will reduce the monthly fee on mobile phones by 50 per cent from \$12 to \$6. This measure will result in immediate savings for every mobile customer and is a part of our commitment to lowering the cost of essential services. This tax reduction will take effect from 1 July 2025 and is expected to reduce revenue by \$2 million.

Madam President, the following fee within these regulations will be amended within the existing head in the revised 2025 Fee Schedule as follows:

- Head 76 (Telecommunications Act 1986), provisions section 1(e)(iv).

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister Caesar.

Would any Senator care to speak on these Regulations?

No. Hearing none. It's over to you, Minister.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Sorry, give me a second, Madam President.

*[Crosstalk]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** I move that [Standing Order] 26 be—

*[Pause and crosstalk]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the said draft Regulations be approved and that the following message be sent to His Excellency the Governor.

“May it please Your Excellency, the Senate having had under consideration the draft Regulations entitled the Government Fees Amendment Regulations 2025 proposed to be made by the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 2 of the Government Fees Act 1965 has the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Senate has approved the said draft Regulations.”

**The President:** Senators, do you give your approval?

Yes. Thank you. A suitable message will be sent.

*[Motion carried: The Government Fees Amendment Regulations 2025 were approved.]*

**The President:** That takes care of Item No. 2 on our Orders of the Day. Item No. 3 we did earlier, yes.

So, we move on to Item No. 4 which is the second reading of the Land Tax Amendment Act 2025 and that is in the name of Senator the Honourable Crystal Caesar, spokesperson for Finance [in the Senate].

Senator . . . Minister Caesar you can have the floor when you are ready.

## BILL

### SECOND READING

#### LAND TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, today I am presenting to this Honourable Chamber the [Land Tax Amendment Act 2025](#). This Bill will amend the Land Tax Act 1967 by decreasing the base rate of land tax for residential units.

Madam President, as the Honourable Premier and Finance Minister stated in the budget speech, Bermuda's 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 was introduced and set at \$300 a year. Given the Island's fiscal progress, more relief can be provided. The Government will reduce the base rate of land tax from \$300 per year to \$150. This reduction will apply to all homeowners and renters who pay land tax.

Madam President, as Senators in this Honourable Chamber are aware, annual land tax is managed in two periods from 1 July to 31 December, and 1 January to 30 June each year. The proposed change to the land tax base rate will go into effect as of 1 January 2026. This ensures that the Office of the Tax Commissioner has sufficient time to make the necessary adjustments to billing amounts and notices to be provided to the impacted homeowners.

Madam President, we hear the cries from our people who are finding it difficult to navigate our economic landscape and offer assistance as we can. This reduction will assist homeowners and renters.

I will also add, Madam President, that the majority of the workforce, which we can safely assume also includes a number of homeowners, have seen their taxes decrease in prior fiscal years. Having done this and achieved balance, we believe that this is the right time to provide this relief.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister.

Would any Senator care to speak on this Bill?

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Marcus Jones, Opposition Leader in the Senate, you have the floor.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Thank you, Madam President, and thank you, Minister of Education, spokesman for Finance Caesar. We do support this Land Tax Amendment Act for 2025. Any way that we can find relief for our fellow citizens in times of hardship and cost of living being at the status that it is in right now, we would agree and concur that this amendment pass.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** And thank you. Would any other Senator care to speak on this Bill?

Hearing none, then Minister Caesar, you have full support.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled the Land Tax Amendment Act 2025 be now read a second time.

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

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 26

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that [Standing Order] 26 be suspended in respect of this Bill.

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

*[Motion carried: Standing Order 26 suspended.]*

### BILL

#### THIRD READING

##### LAND TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled the Land Tax Amendment Act 2025 be now read a third time.

**The President:** Is there any objection to the third reading?  
No objection.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill do now pass.

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

The Bill is passed.

Thank you, Minister Caesar.

*[Motion carried: The Land Tax Amendment Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]*

**The President:** Senators, we will now move on to Item No. 5 on our Orders of the Day, and that is the second reading of the Payroll Tax Amendment Act 2025. And that is also in the name of the Honourable Crystal Caesar, Minister and spokesperson for Finance [in the Senate].

### BILL

#### SECOND READING

##### PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President.

I am pleased to present to this Honourable House the [Payroll Tax Amendment Act 2025](#). This Bill will make amendments to both the Payroll Tax Act 1995 and the Payroll Tax Rates Act 1995.

Madam President, the effect of these amendments is to exempt the employee portion of payroll tax on payments made to employees on account of redundancy or otherwise in connection with the permanent termination of employment.

Madam President, this Bill represents our commitment to supporting employees during the uncertainty that comes with job losses. By providing payroll tax relief on redundancy and like payments, it ensures that more money stays in the hands of those affected. This Government is committed to providing relief and assistance to the people who need it most.

Madam President, the first amendment will establish a special provision in the Payroll Tax Act for remuneration paid to an employee in connection with the permanent termination of employment on account of redundancy or otherwise. Under the current legislation, such payments would be subject to payroll tax on both the employer and employee portions for up to three years following termination. This amendment will now exempt those payments from the employee standard rate bands, thereby providing meaningful relief to the employee during a critical period of transition.

Madam President, the Second Amendment pertains to the Payroll Tax Rates Act 1995, which currently outlines tax based on employee rate bands. This amendment introduces a significant change in prescribing a zero percent rate on the employee portion of payroll tax for remuneration paid in connection with the permanent termination of employment.

Madam President, in conclusion, I wish to reaffirm that this government remains steadfast in its commitment to listening to the people. We continue to act with fiscal responsibility and sound governance while delivering meaningful relief where it is most needed.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister.

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

### SENATE VISITOR

**The President:** Before I present it to the Senators, I would just like to acknowledge and to welcome [the Honourable] Minister Diallo Rabain, the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

Welcome you, sir.

*[Second reading debate, continuing]*

**The President:** Would any Senator care to speak on this Bill?

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Yes, Madam President.

**The President:** Senator Marcus Jones, you have the floor.

**Sen. Marcus Jones:** Thank you, Madam President.

The Opposition . . . we definitely support this amendment to the payroll tax. This is an example of a targeted tax break that makes sense, and so we support it.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Marcus Jones.

Senator Cunningham, I see you. You have the floor.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Thank you. I do have one question, as this actually, unfortunately, related to me a few years ago.

But while you have got the government statutory amount for redundancy pay, some companies will pay over that. So, I'm just wanting to make sure that this Bill would still reflect any redundancy pay and whether or not employers might add final leaving bonuses and things like that. It's just a case of how it would all kind of work out.

<sup>2</sup>And my second, I guess, supplemental to that would be, would it apply to (what I have never had) a golden handshake or an executive severance package? And is there going to be a cap or a threshold on the maximum amount that you would be exempt from payroll tax? Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

*[Pause]*

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** I would like to answer the second question first, if you do not mind, Madam President.

**The President:** Not at all.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** The legislation actually does speak to . . . I am sorry, a tax on the statutory amount and does not speak to amounts over that. But we are just seeking . . . if you could just ask your first question again, please.

We are just seeking clarification.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** So my first question is, as I understand it, currently the redundancy pay, statutory is two weeks per year, up to 26 weeks, I think. So if the employer making the employee redundant ends up doing three weeks per year, or there being no maximum, they have worked somewhere for 30 years, they just keep going, would the tax be on top of that statutory? And I think you have kind of just answered it.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Yes, yes.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Would there be . . . would that extra week be payroll taxed and two weeks that are statutory be not?

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Right. So yes, I think the answer to the previous question would also inform the answer to this.

The statutory amount obviously must be complied with. And if an employer, you know, wanted to be that much more gracious, then that is not necessarily subject to the tax.

And I believe that's it.

**The President:** Yes. Thank you.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled Payroll Tax Amendment Act 2025 be now read a second time.

**The President:** Is there any objection to the second reading?

No objection.

### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 26

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that [Standing Order] 26 be suspended in respect of this Bill.

**The President:** Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

*[Motion carried: Standing Order 26 suspended.]*

## BILL

### THIRD READING

<sup>2</sup> See [Point of Clarification](#) on page 360

## PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT ACT 2025

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment Act 2025 be now read a third time.

**The President:** Is there any objection to the third reading?

No objection.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Madam President, I move that the Bill do now pass.

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

No objection. The Bill is passed.

Thank you, Minister and thank you, Senators.

*[Motion carried: The Payroll Tax Amendment Act 2025 was read a third time and passed.]*

**The President:** We will now move on to Item No. 6 on our Orders of the Day. And that is the motion to be moved by Senator Mischa G. Fubler, the Junior Minister for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

Senator Fubler, you have the floor.

## MOTION

### CITY OF HAMILTON PLAN 2025

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thank you, Madam President.

I move that the Senate do now take under consideration the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate approves the City of Hamilton Plan 2025, pursuant to the provisions of section 11 of the Development and Planning Act 1974.

**The President:** Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Madam President, we are at a turning point and the way we think about, plan for and build the future of Bermuda's capital. I rise today to move in accordance with section 11 of the Development and Planning Act 1974 that this Honourable Chamber consider and approve the [City of Hamilton Plan 2025](#), a modern and ambitious planning framework designed to transform our city into a place that is not only functional, but also vibrant, people centred and economically resilient.

Madam President, this Plan has undergone a robust consultation process and builds on the successful implementation of the North East Hamilton Local Plan 2022. It reflects a new way of thinking that embraces flexibility, sustainability and strategic investment. This Plan represents a shift from outdated prescriptive planning policies, propelling us boldly into a

more sustainable, adaptable and human centred approach to urban development.

Let us begin with what has rightly been the most discussed element: building heights in the city of Hamilton. There is no question this is the elephant in the room. The City of Hamilton Plan 2025 removes the rigid numerical height cap formerly tied to the cathedral at 138 feet OD (ordinance datum) and introduces in its place a merit-based design led framework. This has led some to ask, *Well, does this mean that someone can build a 30-storey tower with no oversight? Or, What is the maximum building height in the city once the City Plan 2025 comes into effect?*

Madam President, the absence of a fixed number does not imply a lack of control. It signifies that control is now linked to context, design quality and public benefit rather than a uniform rule that treats every site identically. Under this new framework, any building, whether it is 10-, 15-, 25- or more storeys must earn its place on the skyline. This means undergoing a visual impact assessment, submitting a robust design statement, proving it adds value to the public realm, walkability and the urban context.

The Plan introduces a responsive discretion-based framework. Height will be assessed based on location, design quality, context and the proposal's overall contribution to the city. Proposals for tall buildings will not be automatically rejected, nor will they receive rubber stamp approval. They must justify their height. This is not deregulation. It is better regulation.

Madam President, the height limit based on the cathedral served its purpose at one time. However, in the 21st century, in a city where the economic centre is shifting, housing is urgently needed, and inward investment must be attracted. Freezing the skyline to protect a single landmark is no longer practical or sustainable. Our ambition is to build up and build well. This Plan makes that possible.

Madam President, let us not reduce the Plan to just height. It is about much more. This Plan reflects a profound strategic rethinking of how a modern capital city should function. The former 2015 Plan, while valuable in its time, was based on a conventional rigid zoning approach that separated uses, fixed parameters and often resulted in delays, appeals and frustration among investors and developers.

Madam President, the City of Hamilton Plan 2025 is not just a technical document, it is a vision statement for what our capital city can become. It reflects a shift in how we think about urban life, not merely in terms of buildings and roads, but in terms of people, experience and purpose. It envisions Hamilton as a living city, one where housing is accessible, culture and commerce thrive side by side, streets come alive after 5:00 pm and public spaces foster community, creativity and care.

At its core, this Plan delivers some key priorities. It is about placemaking, ensuring that Hamilton becomes a place where people want to spend time, not

just pass through. It is about housing, making the city not only a workplace but a vibrant neighbourhood with diverse residential opportunities.

It is about design, encouraging high-quality architecture that respects heritage but is not bound by replication. It is about sustainability, not just mitigating our impact on climate change but adapting to it through better materials, more innovative infrastructure and climate-conscious design. And crucially, it is about reform, aligning our planning goals with the streamlining of permits, processes and timelines to make good development easier to deliver.

Madam President, the City of Hamilton Plan 2025 is not solely focused on what is constructed but also on how swiftly, effectively and equitably we facilitate its implementation. It is in line with the Government's broader commitment to modernising public services and unlocking private sector potential through more intelligent and responsive governance.

As a result, this Plan will deliver:

- fewer unnecessary planning appeals as clearer policy guidance and earlier engagement reduce ambiguity;
- shorter decision timelines supported by pre-consultation;
- clearer criteria and ongoing reforms to the approvals process;
- greater scope for investment opportunities as underused sites and restrictive zoning rules are replaced with strategic direction and design flexibility; and
- a more agile and responsive urban development system capable of adapting to the changing needs of Hamilton and Bermuda more broadly.

Madam President, we heard during the House debate—or in another place—and likely will hear again today several valid questions. Allow me to address just a few particularly relevant ones.

On parking in the retail core. The Plan prioritises pedestrians to support retail recovery. This is a deliberate choice grounded in global urban best practice. Retail requires foot traffic, not congestion.

On heritage. There are fewer than 10 listed buildings in the city. The Plan endorses innovative design that respects the context rather than attempting to freeze time.

On investor confidence. With the introduction of guidance notes, pre-consultation tools and improved communication, developers will have greater clarity from the outset, making the city not only more appealing for development but also easier to navigate.

Madam President, what we are approving today is not a panacea. It will not on its own fill every vacant lot, repair ageing infrastructure or eliminate economic risk, but what it will do is unlock the potential for Hamilton to grow intelligently, sustainably and ambitiously.

It provides us with the policy tools, the clarity, and the momentum to pursue a bold new direction for our capital. Let us adopt this Plan not because we want to build higher, but because we want to build smarter. Not for change's sake, but because standing still is no longer an option. Not just to enable development, but to reimagine Hamilton as a city where people live, thrive and belong. Let this be the moment where Hamilton begins to rise, with purpose, with vision and with unity.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Mischa Fubler, Junior Minister for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

Would any Senator care to speak on this motion?

Senator Tannock, you have the floor.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Yes, thank you, Madam President.

I find myself in the unpleasant task of criticising something that both parties have unanimously supported, but when I read the Plan, I do have some grave concerns. Those come from, I guess, both facets of my background—my Human Rights Commission hat, but also my international business hat.

When I look at the stakeholders that were consulted, nowhere did I see any Human Rights Commission or the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Seniors, and nowhere did I see any of the international business organisations like ABIR and ABIC.

The reason why this is important to me is that Bermuda, especially from Hamilton Princess right up to the middle of Front Street, is known as colloquially “the billion dollar square mile” because that's where the businesses are located that bring in such a large portion of our income, our GDP.

I guess my first question is, What has been the response from the international business stakeholders to this redevelopment of the land? Do they have any concerns about access, about pedestrianising the land? I just would like to know if that has been factored in and what's been the response.

The second is with regard to disability. We know we have talked about pedestrianising it, but let's just be frank and honest, right? Not everybody can walk the way that we walk, so when we talk about making sure that we have pedestrian lanes, are we also making sure that there is a clear way for disability vans for people who have disabilities to come in, that there is access? I haven't seen a study or impact on those people with disabilities and the way that this will be accessible and enhance their experience.

And then the third is a subsequent [question]. If we are expecting people to become pedestrians, I would assume . . . and I know the parking issue is . . . you said that will be addressed, but I've also seen in the literature that the intent is almost to make it more walk-to-work or more walkable. So how are we

accommodating for that with our public transportation schedules? Will there be more ferries to and from the City of Hamilton? Will there be more buses to and from the City of Hamilton? If we are expecting people to amend the way that they move . . . they are mobile, how are we supporting that with subsequent amendments?

And, you know, I listened to the House debate and I heard MP Swan talk about Marsh Folly being able to be the new Central Park, and all of a sudden I had flashbacks to 1983 and I was at West Pembroke School and we were told that the dump was going to be this fantastic, fantastic centre of urban greenery. Right? So, I felt like saying, *Haven't we been here before?*

So those are my concerns. And like I said, I don't like to be a naysayer because everybody else is patting each other on the back saying this is fantastic, but I do have grave concerns in those areas.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Tannock.

Would any other Senator care to speak on the motion?

Do you have a response?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I do. And so, to Senator Tannock's first question around engaging with stakeholders, we conducted substantial public consultation and the Plan was given an opportunity for any interested party to make comments. I actually recall joining one of the live streams that they held with some of the technical staff from the Planning Department, and I hope that some of the agencies that you referenced, especially around human rights, were engaging in that consultation. Many key stakeholders were also consulted directly.

And while I await some specificity around who those key stakeholders were, around the pedestrianisation, this is the Plan. It's not the city changing the current layout. It would be for new development or renovation. All new development is required to include accessible design. This is further reinforced through the building code after planning approval is granted, and the building permit is issued . . . or being considered.

And I think we will need to . . . okay, so changing hats here from the Cabinet Office to the Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Culture, and Sport, I think there is a concerted effort to enhance the public transit. We highlighted during the debate on Wednesday around the addition of two new ferries added to the fleet and the intention of retiring older public transit vehicles so that we increase the reliability and enhance that public service, specifically around the transport.

And I guess to answer the question, the comment around the Central Park and the dump . . .

[Laughter]

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** It was at one point. It's no longer that, right? And so I am unfortunately unable to give comment to that in this debate because it's outside of

the city limits and not within the remit of this Plan. But I will say that around parking specifically and accessibility, I was reading through the Plan and it made this assertion around there is surplus parking. I said, *But where?* And so then I have to . . . but there is some. And I read the . . . let me pull it up here, I have it in my notes. The City of Hamilton Plan Survey, and they did some rather extensive estimation. They called it "estimation" because they didn't go down and count every spot, but they leveraged both planning records and Google imagery from 2021. And there are 1,755 private on-site, non-residential parking spaces within the limits of the City of Hamilton and a further 1,818 public off-street car parking spaces, which are available. That's quite a lot, right?

There are 3,573 public and private non-residential car parking spaces within the city and then a further 366 just along the city boundary, including places like Woodlands Parking Lot, BAA, the Tennis Stadium and Dutton Ave. And so, I think the parking concerns should be allayed in that regard. And I don't know how many of you utilise the Bull's Head parking lot. I work in that area. And unless I'm very late, even when I am rather late, I can still find significant parking on the top floor, which I do try to avoid to stay out of the sun. But the salient point being that I think the parking is handled.

I do take your point around the accessibility. And so we do have a number of handicapped parking spaces. And I do note sometimes I see consternation on social media from folks who are not disabled saying that there's too many of them. But I think I would kind of agree with you as well. And so I'm glad to see in the responses that there is consideration made to all planning proposals to ensure that the new development has accessible design. And accessibility within the public realm falls within the remit of the Corporation of Hamilton. And the Plan fully supports inclusive design. Comprehensive studies of parking need will be required, which will include accessible parking.

With this kind of shift in behaviour and the impact on the city, again, I did some additional research because we were originally going to debate this on Tuesday. And you look at cities like Barcelona, and they did a significant change where they drastically reduced the ability or the ease of driving your vehicle through the city. And they saw significant revitalisation in the city. And there are many other instances. And so given kind of our ageing population and challenges with health, we may need to adjust somewhat there. But I think encouraging walkability in the city will be net positive, even with having to consider the accessible design for those of us who are less mobile.

I have some more responses from the technical officers around consultation. And so just to name a few of the key stakeholders, they included the Chamber of Commerce, the Corporation of Hamilton, all government stakeholders, the Institute of Bermuda Architects, some non-governmental organisations as well.

They had several Facebook Live sessions. I alluded to one that I joined because, for the benefit of the listening public, my undergraduate degree is in urban studies, which is a combination of city planning and sociology. So learning about how cities have developed over time and kind of some guiding principles or best practices for developing vibrant and sustainable cities. And so I was rather excited to see this is the direction of travel that the city is moving into.

From the technical officers who developed the brief and the Plan, unfortunately, the concerns around the transport regarding pedestrianisation is outside of their remit. But as I briefly mentioned, the Department of Public Transportation and Marine and Ports are both in this budget, even allocating funding to enhance the public transportation service as well.

And so hopefully I have answered your questions, but please let me know if you have any supplementaries.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** I do have a supplementary question. So the first is regarding parking spaces. So you mentioned that cumulatively there are about 3,500. Was that your estimation, something like that?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** That is the Planning Department's estimation. They did a survey in the lead up to developing the plan, the City Survey Report from January 2024. And with the leave of Madam President, I can read in a section from page 216.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Well, I actually have a . . . so I guess my follow-up is that number means nothing to me because I don't know how many cars require parking. I don't know how many cars come into the city every day. I don't know if that's a sufficient number or if it's too little or too low. I wanted if you had that information, how many vehicles that require parking come into the City of Hamilton every day?

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Sure. Madam President, not for us to get hung up specifically on the parking, maybe my diversion into that space was not the right approach. But I will also note in the City of Hamilton Plan that the limitations on parking there speak to requiring any new parking on site to conform with the kind of strategic direction that the city takes for parking.

They are looking to have a strategic approach to how we design new parking. And when you look at the vibrant cities internationally, a significant proportion of the people that live there, they don't even own a car. You look at New York City and they had a subset, the commuters basically saying, *hey, we shouldn't have congestion pricing*.

But the people that live in New York, they don't mind, they use transit, they walk around and we are looking to have significantly more people living in the city. That's part of the reason why the plan removes that cap on the building height to try and encourage more

people living and working in the city. And I think that the right approach as to the number that's needed, I guess, need is of course subjective. Does everybody need to drive into the city? I would argue no. And I think it will be easier for people to avail themselves of the public transportation as we continue to enhance that service as well.

**The President:** Senator Fubler—

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Sorry. And I just did have one supplementary question with regard to the consultation of stakeholders.

Your response was that you are not sure if the international business community participated in those consultations and you are also not sure whether or not the Office of Disability or Seniors or the Human Rights Commission participated in those consultations.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Correct. I personally am not, but I am consulting with the technical officers who conducted the consultations. And to use their words that outside of those key stakeholders that I enumerated specifically, they say, *The list goes on“!”* (exclamation point). So, I assume that several other groups were consulted. The ABIR and ABIC are arguably also represented by the Chamber of Commerce, I would hope.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** No, they are not. I am the deputy chairperson of ABIC.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Oh, okay.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** So I can tell you we are not represented by the Chamber of Commerce.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Okay, I am sorry for that. And so I do not know if this is appropriate, but I will ask, were you consulted?

*[No audible response.]*

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** No? Okay, so I will endeavour to provide a more substantive response in writing to that around which case stakeholders were consulted directly.

But just to hit again on the point that the consultative process was rather involved and appeals were made to all members of the public to participate in the process, including those several Facebook Live sessions and the virtual meetings with many groups, including architects, agents, real estate agents, et cetera. And I guess again, from kind of a personal perspective, I know the associations like ABIC and ABIR are valued partners in the international business space.

But I think the kind of primary motivation for how we shape the city for the next decade plays to be people centred. And so hopefully they participated. They were invited, but I do not know if we should add

kind of primacy or precedence to them being consulted directly.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Thank you, Senator Fubler. I always enjoy having discussions with you. I appreciate your feedback.

[Laughter]

**The President:** Senator Fubler, it's left to you to pass your motion.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thank you. And so . . . what's the one I got here? All right.

Madam President, I appreciate the strong support for the Plan, from many of my colleagues, and the challenging, thought-provoking questions that have been raised by the Independent Senator. They were very welcome. I think it is important to challenge ideas so that we can arrive at what is the best option amongst the ones we have. And her questions especially highlight the importance of getting this right, not just on paper, but in practice.

And while this plan does not contain all of the answers as highlighted during the question-and-answer period, it provides the framework and tools for us to respond to the evolving needs of our city. I take seriously the issues raised today and commit to collaborating with stakeholders to ensure this Plan delivers meaningful outcomes that today mark the beginning of that process.

And Madam President, I now move that the motion be approved.

**The President:** Is there any objection to the approval of the motion?

No objection. The motion is approved.

[Motion carried: The City of Hamilton Plan 2025 was approved.]

**The President:** Thank you, Senator Fubler, and thank you, Senators. We will move on.

## MOTIONS

**The President:** There are none.

## QUESTION PERIOD

[Recommitted]

**The President:** And before we move on to item 15, Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, I would just like to inform Senators that Minister Caesar, in her capacity as spokesperson for Finance [in the Senate], to

provide answers to questions raised on the Bill, the Customs Tariff Amendment Act [*sic*] earlier.

She does have those answers for you, and I would just like to make a comment, and that is, prior to Minister Caesar providing her answers, I want to advise that there will be no supplemental debate as the Bill has already passed. She is only providing the answers to the questions posed this morning as she announced that she would do.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Senator Caesar, you have the floor.

## BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President, and it's actually the Bermuda Monetary Authority Annual Report [2024] questions that I will be speaking to. And I do thank the technical officers for providing this information in such an efficient and timely manner so as to provide the responses today.

I will read the question and then the answer provided.

<sup>3</sup>The question was, *How does the Bermuda Monetary Authority manage the rapid expansion of digital finance growth in Bermuda with robust consumer protection?* The answer is that the BMA ensures effective oversight of Bermuda's rapidly evolving digital sector through a comprehensive and adaptive approach. This includes a specific focus on ensuring that licenced entities are adhering to their conduct obligations to treat customers fairly. The BMA continues to update the framework to address emerging risks and align with international standards.

With the growing sector, there comes increased fee revenue which allows for a growing team that closely supervises all licenced FinTech firms and supports innovation through the regulatory sandbox. It should be noted that our BMA supervisors are very experienced in the FinTech sector as the BMA has been supervising this sector since 2018.

The BMA actively monitors the market to ensure all relevant activities are appropriately regulated and has strategically developed relationships with other regulators through a memorandum of understanding which will assist with effective oversight and also is a member of other regulatory bodies such as IOSCO, FSB Regional Consultancy Group, Global Financial Innovation Network, and they focus on emerging issues assisting the BMA to keep the regulatory framework and applications current.

There was another question, Madam President, with regard to executive compensation. *Given the*

<sup>3</sup> See Parliamentary [Question](#) asked by Senator Marcus Jones on page 286

dramatic increase in compensation and board fees, what benchmarks or standards were used for the increases in compensation? And the answer is that in order to obtain and maintain requisite talent that allows for the BMA to achieve a globally recognised status, such as equivalence under the EU's Solvency II Directive and recognition by the US NAIC, for which very few jurisdictions have achieved, the BMA uses benchmarks that involve comparable foreign regulatory bodies and also local factors given the BMA is also in competition locally in a number of skill set areas.

Salaries and benefits have grown year over year, proportionate to the change in the BMA's headcount. The BMA's recognition by foreign regulators ultimately benefits Bermuda and the financial sector, allowing financial services companies to set up in Bermuda and operate globally with minimum overseas hurdles such as reduced collateral requirements being imposed upon them by other jurisdictions. This provides this jurisdiction a competitive advantage, making it more attractive for financial services.

Assessors not only review whether regulatory frameworks meet the standard, but assessment also includes both the quantity of staff and their respective skills to implement the frameworks. The BMA is assessed by international standard setters, and it is required to have a complement of staff that is sufficient enough to regulate and supervise the given size, nature, and complexity of the business it regulates. Not only does Bermuda have one of the largest insurance markets in the world, but it is also the home of four designated international active insurance groups (IAIGs) that are subject to the highest international standards and scrutiny.

Anything less than the required staffing complement, both in number and skill sets, would negatively affect Bermuda's reputation and result in Bermuda not being viewed as well as its peers. Therefore, appropriate staff and corporate governance of the BMA is required.

The year-over-year variance in compensation is largely attributed to increases in headcount due to the aforementioned explanation. The board compensation is part of a regular assessment of the BMA's board effectiveness and includes a review of both performance and skill sets. A strong contributor to the organisation's success is that the board members are fairly compensated for their oversight of the BMA's strategy, risk, and management.

Compensation remained fairly static in the recent past years. Similarly, the salary for the CEO's position had been the same for approximately the last decade prior to the 2024 increase.

I believe I answered the question with regard to the nature of staff, whether they are local versus work permit holders. I answered that earlier today.

Finally, the last question is information sharing with regard to the corporate income tax. *What is the level of information shared by the BMA with the Ministry*

*of Finance and the newly formed CIT Commission with regard to entities that have declared deferred tax assets to the BMA? Does the BMA provide feedback on this?* The response is that the BMA continues to cooperate with all local agencies, including the CIT, to the extent that it is allowed under the law. Therefore, cooperation has included the sharing of best practices and other capacity-building information.

The BMA does not have statutory powers to share information with the CITA regarding confidential licensee information. However, the authority does have the statutory power to share information with the Ministry of Finance and may share any information requested by the Ministry of Finance that is required to assist in carrying out its statutory duties and functions.

Thank you for your indulgence, Madam President. I believe I have answered the questions from today.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister Crystal Caesar. We appreciate you taking the time to get the answers and to provide it. We will now move on to—oh . . .

#### **POINT OF CLARIFICATION** [Payroll Tax Amendment Act 2025]

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Madam President, in the spirit of moving on, I have a point of clarification—

**The President:** Yes.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** —and that was in response to a question asked by Senator Cunningham in relation to the Payroll Tax Amendment.

I think her specific question was about whether there was a cap on the remuneration. My colleague, Senator Caesar, was answering there is no cap, but we still thought it was under the statutory section.

I did have to look it up, Senator Cunningham, and it is not. It is just tied to remuneration under 7(1)(c) of the primary Act, which is the Payroll Tax Act 1995, which really refers to *any money that is in connection with the termination*. Whether your golden handshake might be eligible is a question of the particular contract, but if the remuneration is in fact tied to the termination of the employment or the redundancy, the employee portion of the tax is waived. The employer will still have to pay its share on your hefty handshake. Thank you.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister Wilkerson, for giving that [clarification].

Senator Lindsay Simmons, you have a—

[Inaudible interjection]

**The President:** Yes. We will move on now.

Senator Lindsay Simmons, you have indicated you—

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Yes, Madam President.

**The President:** —want to speak. You can speak now.

## CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

**Sen. Lindsay Simmons:** Thank you, Madam President.

First of all, I wanted to highlight and congratulate Tahjae Welch. Tahjae won the international award, the FMI Food Industry Association 2025 Store Manager Award. He . . . it was a global pool of hundreds of entrants. Mr. Welch competed, and then once he won that pool, he then competed against two other finalists in the International Retailers category and won. But I wanted to highlight, if you do not mind, Madam President, something that he said that I think should be heard—not just seen but heard. He said, “To be recognised on a global scale in the grocery industry just shows other young males of the community that there is still a young man out there doing positive things.”

He added, “Leading by example—it makes a big impact.”

He works at A1 in Paget. His parents were there to congratulate him. His MarketPlace family was there, and friends and family were there. This is a huge accomplishment, especially in a time when we have so many negativities out there with our young Black males. He's the youngest manager to work in The MarketPlace. So I just want to, again, congratulate Tahjae Welch for his award that he won, because that's phenomenal.

On another note, Madam President, I would like to give condolences to Clyde Darrell's family. When I started to run in constituency 10, I was told to come to Mr. Darrell, and Mr. Darrell welcomed me into his home, and he had my back. His whole neighbourhood, he would send them messages and let them know that I was there. And he was the reason why I started collecting the trash on Bridle Hill. He told me about the issues on Bridle Hill. So I want to say condolences to his wife, Dawn Darrell, his daughter, Katrina, his son, Clyde Jr., his grandchildren, Josiah, Anaiah, Aaria, and Aiden Darrell. May he rest in peace.

I also want to give condolences to the family of Ralph Eugene Bean, Sr., known as “Gumbo.” He was an intricate part of the sports community, especially in our village. So condolences to his wife, Carol Bean, his son, Ralph Jr., and his daughter, I know as Nikki, but Robin Nicole Smith, her husband, Clay, and their grandchildren.

I also want to give condolences to the family of Brackston (Braxton) Ronald Llewellyn Simmons. He was a proud father of Linda Bogle-Mienzer, her wife, Christine, Roseann “Buffy” Mienzer, as well as his grandchildren and also . . . the whole family. So condolences to the Simmons-Mienzer family.

And the last person I wanted to give . . . well, two more, sorry . . . to give condolences to Chriss Russell Thomas and his family on the passing of Chriss to his son, Chrishan, who is my cousin, and all his family and friends condolences.

And lastly, I would like to give, sorry, two more. I want to also give condolences to the family of Honnee Smith, who tragically lost her life, to her aunt Ashley. Condolences to you, Callahj, and Jenny. You guys are in my prayers—and her daughter, Halia.

And lastly, I promise, I want to give condolences to the family of Olive Layne. Olive also lives in constituency 10. And I just wanted to give condolences to her son, Cyril, her daughter-in-law, Kenlene Steede, her grandchildren, Moses Steede, and to the whole family. May she also rest in peace.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Senator.

I see your hand, Senator Victoria Cunningham. You have the floor.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Well, I did not think I was going to be here tonight, so I did them a little early. But I want to now congratulate our Gombey Warriors for their amazing 5-0 victory.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** They are one step closer to the World Cup. I think Bermuda, the entire Island, is going to be behind them. I want to particularly highlight Zeiko Lewis, who's a young man I've been working with, who scored at the 12-minute penalty on his 31st birthday. So, congratulations to the entire team, the manager of the team, I think it's coach Michael Findlay. And I want to say Bermuda is proud of you. So, let's keep going.

**The President:** Yes.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** And secondly, even though she just beat me to the punch, I would like to wish our Senate colleague, Lindsay Simmons, a happy birthday for tomorrow.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** Thank you for skilfully handing two Ministry briefs today.

**The President:** Yes, absolutely.

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** You were complaining about how much speaking you could do. Well, you could just give us time for more questions and then you wouldn't have to speak so long.

*[Laughter]*

**Sen. Victoria Cunningham:** But I think you deserve a well-deserved break. And thank you for the cake.

**The President:** Would any other Senator?

Yes, Senator Tawana Tannock, you have the floor.

**Sen. Tawana Tannock:** Yes. Thank you, Madam President. I would just like to send get well soon wishes to my mom who is hospitalised. I was not able to visit her today because I was in this Chamber. But I know . . . if I know her, she is probably listening. So Mommy, get well soon. I love you.

**The President:** And we will join you in wishing her well, too.

Would any other Senator care to—Senator Crystal Caesar, you have the floor.

**Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar:** Thank you, Madam President. I know that these two gentlemen in particular have been mentioned in another place, but I thought it fitting to end, also earlier this week.

But I would like to pay my respects to the families, firstly, of counsellor and former Senator and lawyer Larry Scott. I pay my respects to his family in that he was very much well known for being a drive for social justice and was still serving as a counsellor at the time of his passing. I would like to . . . he is very well known as the consummate gentleman. He was very vocal on issues of social justice in Bermuda, and I believe that he will definitely be a miss.

And finally, for me, I would like to speak on somebody who is near and dear to my heart. In fact, he was the father of my very first friend in that she and I were crib mates, and they were neighbours of mine for a long time. And I speak of none other than [Dr.] Melvyn Bassett.

He has contributed much over the years to the Bermuda community, very well known in Somerset and Island wide as an educator and obviously the principal at the Sandys Secondary Middle School. He presided over the change back in . . . 20-some years ago now from a secondary school to a middle school. He also was instrumental in seeing the construction of Sandys 360. And we are hoping that with time that it will come back to its former glory because it was a vision of his and very much a . . . much needed community location for young people.

He presided over the Association of School Principals, served as vice chairman of the Bermuda Middle School Association. He was very instrumental with the National Drug Commission, the Police Advisory Committee, and the Archibald Drug Commission. I mean, there was just no end to what this gentleman did in terms of serving Bermuda.

Most notably for me, as I said, he was the father of my very first friend and stood with me at the very last two elections, the very last one and the one before.

He said, *Oh, I can give a couple of hours.* And so he'd come and then stay till the end.

Just an extraordinary gentleman. His family will miss him tremendously. His daughter, Rusheika, and his son-in-law . . . her husband, I expressed to them and their five children, his grandchildren, which he doted on tremendously. In fact, I was quite surprised to hear that he had passed as he had just attended two of their graduations mere weeks, maybe days before his untimely passing.

I know that he was very respected, like I said, in the Somerset community and Island wide. And so I do express my condolences at his passing. Oh, and I'd like to say he also shares the birthday, same birthday as my mom. So that was always . . . they would always call each other on their birthdays.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** And thank you, Senator Caesar.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Hearing none, then it's—sorry, you wanted to speak.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** I do, Madam President. Thank you.

**The President:** Senator Wilkerson.

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** I had already certainly raised condolences to the family of Melvyn Bassett. But I certainly appreciate my colleague's personal reminiscence of him. And he was absolutely a figure in our neighbourhood.

Madam President, I rise to congratulate the organisers last evening for the event put on by the Sargasso Sea Commission in Bermuda in advance of World Ocean Day, which is on Saturday.

And I had the pleasure, well, I was not watching the football because I went to see the film, *Ocean*, narrated by the great David Attenborough at BUEI. And I simply wanted to say it was a . . . the film was beautiful and disturbing at the same time when we think about what is happening with our oceans and the ocean is the thing that unites all of the world and its people. And what we have to do to continue to protect the ocean. And this film and the panel discussion that followed really highlighted the role that Bermuda plays because of our unique position in the world and in the ocean in driving forward change around protection.

And so in that regard, I do want to call out and congratulate, not that they may be listening at this point in time, Fae Sapsford, who is a Marine Research Fellow with the Sargasso Sea Commission, and her colleague, Ali Hochberg, who hosted the panel last night, which also included Dr. Mark Guishard from BIOS, J.P. Rouja for all of the amazing work that he's doing around environmental DNA tracking, along with Carika Weldon, where there is no end to her capacity. And we also

heard from Jessica Mello on aspects of the blue economy.

So, a well . . . really, really well done set of presentations, and certainly a call to action around the ocean. So, I wanted to congratulate them and certainly make all of Bermuda aware that we have a role to play. And certainly, there are a number of events going on Saturday, down at the Aquarium, at BUEI and so on in relation to World Ocean Day.

But I think that people should take away that as we approach summer, and as we think about how we're engaging with the ocean, that we continue to be mindful about our use of plastics, about how we treat things, what we take away, because this is a resource that will continue to pay us back if we treat it properly.

Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister Wilkerson, Madam Attorney General, and Leader in the—Government Leader in the Senate.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Oh, I didn't see you for a moment.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I wasn't—I wasn't putting my hand up quite high enough there.

**The President:** Senator Fubler, you have the floor.

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** Thank you. And I guess I'll start out by associating myself with the comments from Senator Cunningham for our Gombey Warriors. It was a delight to watch them put several goals into the Cayman Islands, especially in the second half. A pleasure to watch.

And then also, I would like to extend congratulations to the charity Bermuda is Love, and many of you, and if you have not yet, I encourage you to go check out their social media. This month, their campaign, which changes month to month, so commendable, they're putting in quite a lot of volunteer effort, is focused on housing and having . . . encouraging people to kind of rethink the commodification of housing. You know, one of their central tenets is that housing is a human right, and it's something that I agree with personally. And so congratulations to them, June 2025, they are encouraging you to join them.

And then finally, I would also like to extend congratulations to Out Bermuda. They, at the past weekend, had another instance of their Tea Time, which are smaller sessions intended to provide Q&A session and introduction to members of the LGBTQ community, as well as allies, so that they can familiarise themselves with their current executive, as well as provide some detail around the events that are coming up next month, actually, culminating with July 5th being the Pride Parade and the, I guess concert, for lack of a better word, in the park. And just to declare my interest, I am one of the performers. I'll be DJing, as I have been since its inception.

So come down if you like to dance, or if you want to help provide support.

*[Laughter]*

**Sen. Mischa Fubler:** I'm sure most of us in the listening public, many of us have a family member who is a member of the community, and who may be apprehensive about living in their truth. And so you, as an ally, or just someone who thinks that they should be able to exist in our society, should join the parade, because this was something that stood out from the presentation.

Our participation helps to provide cover for those who may not quite yet be comfortable in coming out, as it were, but they can then participate. They encourage you, those of us who work for entities who like to sponsor and send groups to participate, that you should participate as well to help provide cover, as it were. But again, congratulations to both of those groups.

And I'll wrap up there, because it is quite late. Thank you, Madam President.

**The President:** Thank you, Minister Fubler.

Minister Wilkerson, Attorney General and Government Leader in the Senate, it is over to you.

## ADJOURNMENT

**Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson:** Thank you, Madam President.

I now move that the Senate adjourn until July 2.

**The President:** Thank you.

Would any Senator care to speak on the motion to adjourn?

Hearing none. I thank you all for your attendance today and the hard work that you were able to accomplish.

The Senate stands adjourned. Thank you.

*[At 8:09 pm, the Senate stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Wednesday, 2 July 2025.]*

*[This page intentionally left blank.]*