



2025/26 SESSION of the

BERMUDA SENATE

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

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

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10:02 AM**

Sitting Number 20 of the 2025/26 Session

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

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

PRAYERS

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

The President: Please be seated.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The President: I call on Vice President John Wight.

Sen. John Wight: Good morning, Madam President.

The President: Good morning.

Sen. John Wight: I move that the Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, 18 March 2026, be taken as read.

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

Sen. John Wight: Madam President, I move that—

The President: Oh, sorry—

Sen. Tawana Tannock: I have my hand up. I object.

The President: Yes.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Thank you.

The President: Senator Tannock.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Yes, good morning, Madam President.

Regarding the Minutes of 18 March 2026, I object on the grounds that when we read the Municipalities [Reform] [Act], and it was noted that there was an objection to the third reading of the Bill, it was not noted how many people objected or who objected.

That was an aberration because for the rest of the Minutes it notes who objects and how many people object. I would like to know, for that reading, how many

people are listed and recorded as objecting to the third reading.

Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Senator Tannock. We will take that under advisement and we will make a decision.

Minister Wilkerson.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Madam President, I am not sure anything turns on the comment that Senator Tannock has made with the Chamber's understanding of [Standing Order] 35. So, all that you needed to satisfy yourself of was that there were more than three objecting.

The President: Mm-hmm.
Yes, Senator . . .

Sen. Tawana Tannock: And I would like a note of that. I would like a note of who was objecting. Thank you. That's . . . that's what I'm saying. I would like it recorded in the Minutes, the three people, or the more-than-three people, that were noted as objecting. Thank you.

So, I do not . . . I do not move that the Minutes be passed because I do not think it's an accurate recording.

Sen. John Wight: So, am I to understand that we defer the approval of the Minutes.

The President: For that date.

Sen. John Wight: So, I move that the Minutes of the . . . I move that the Minutes of Wednesday, 18 March [2026], be deferred.

The President: Thank you. And the Minutes of the 23rd.

Sen. John Wight: Madam President, I move that the consideration of the Minutes of the meeting of Monday, 23 March 2026, be deferred.

The President: Thank you, Vice President John Wight.

MESSAGES

The President: Mrs. Beale.

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

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The President: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The President: There are none.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The President: There are none.

PETITIONS

The President: There are none.

STATEMENTS

The President: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The President: There are none.

FIRST READING OF PUBLIC BILLS

The President: There are none.

FIRST READING OF PRIVATE BILLS

The President: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The President: Senators, there are no questions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The President: That moves us to the Orders of the Day, and I will call on Minister Crystal Caesar.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Thank you and good morning, Madam President,—

The President: Good morning.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: —and good morning to the listening audience.

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 2026 together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2026/27.

The President: Thank you.

I will now call on Vice President John Wight who will take the Chair of the Committee. He will be assisted by Senator Tannock.

Senate in Committee at 10:07 am

[Sen. John Wight, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

APPROPRIATION ACT 2026

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2026/27

The Chairman: Good morning, Senators and the listening audience. We are now in Committee of the whole [Senate] for further consideration of the Appropriation Act 2026 together with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2026/27. We have three ministries under consideration to be led by Junior Minister Fubler.

We will start with the Tourism Ministry which is Head 71 on page B-234. There will be Tourism, Marine and Ports and then Sport and Recreation. I suppose it's up to the Junior Minister to allocate the time appropriately for the three hours allocated to these three ministries.

It is now 10:08 [am], and we will have three hours allocated to these three ministries.

So, Junior Minister Fubler, how do you wish to proceed?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to propose that we continue with the model we used at our previous debate. I am seeing approval from across the aisle, and so with your leave I will begin.

The Chairman: Please proceed.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM, TRANSPORT, CULTURE AND SPORT

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Thank you.

And so, Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now take under consideration Head 71, Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sport; Head 30, Marine and Ports, and Head 20, Sport and Recreation.

The Chairman: Please proceed, Junior Minister. Thank you.

HEAD 71—MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, it gives me great pleasure to present the budget for Head 71,

the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport Headquarters, as found on pages B-233 through B-237 of the Budget Book.

The mission statement of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport Headquarters is, *To enhance visitor experience by positioning our destination as a diverse and globally competitive hub through strategic networking and relationship building, to further expand access to culture and sports and to ensure the transportation of all people and goods efficiently and safely*, as found on page B-234.

Expenditure Overview

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, a total of \$39,120,000, as shown on page B-235 of the Budget Book, has been allocated to the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport Headquarters, [Head 71]. This budget allocation represents 36 per cent of the total budget allocation for the Ministry as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, Head 71, Headquarters, now reflects the consolidation of the former Head 48, and Head 71, following the merger of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport with the Ministry of Transport in February of 2025. As part of this restructuring, the functions, resources, and responsibilities previously recorded under Head 48 have been fully integrated into [Head] 71. Accordingly, Head 48 has ceased to exist as a stand-alone Head. As a result of this consolidation, there is a zero-budget allocation under the former Head for the 2026/27 fiscal year, and no activity will be recorded under it. All financial and operational activity is now appropriately reflected within Head 71.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport Headquarters serve as the central engine for strategic leadership, policy direction, and oversight across Bermuda's tourism, transport, culture and sport sectors. It sets the overall vision and ensures that these interconnected areas work together to drive national progress. Through coordinated initiatives, legislative development, and high-level guidance to the department and agencies, Headquarters play a key role in strengthening governance, improving service delivery, and positioning Bermuda as competitive and forward-looking both at home and abroad.

This investment supports the continued modernisation of Bermuda's transportation infrastructure, including our ports and public transit systems, while also advancing the development of our sports and cultural sectors. Together, these efforts enhance the daily lives of our residents, create economic opportunity, and elevate the overall visitor experience, reinforcing Bermuda's reputation as a vibrant and well-managed destination.

Mr. Chairman, the departments which come under the remit of the Ministry Headquarters include

- Department of Sport and Recreation, Head 20;
- Department of Marine and Ports, Head 30;

- Transport Control Department, Head 34;
- Public Transportation, Head 35; and
- Department of Culture, Head 52.

In addition, the Headquarters oversee 28 authorities, boards, councils, and committees, namely: the Bermuda Airport Authority; the Bermuda Arts Council; the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority; Bermuda National Events and Entertainment Committee; the Bermuda Shipping and Maritime Authority; the Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Authority and the Appeals and Discipline Boards; the Bermuda Tourism Authority; the Golf Courses Board; Hotel Licensing and Appeal Tribunal; the Liquor Licensing Authority; the National Sports Centre Board; nine parish councils; Naming and Recognition Committee; the Public Service Vehicles Licensing Board; the Ports Authority Board; the Road Safety Council; the Medical Reference Committee, and the Water Safety Council.

Revenue Overview

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, Revenue Overview is shown on page B-236. It is anticipated that during the 2026/27 budget cycle, Headquarters will collect approximately \$1,444,000 in revenue. This revenue is mainly collected from vacation rental fees, liquor licensing fees, and hotel licences.

General Summary Expenditure and Subjective Analysis

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, I will now explain the breakdown of budget allocations by business unit. These amounts are found on page B-235.

Business Unit 8100, Administration

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the estimated budget for the Administration Section is \$38,496,000. This represents an increase of \$5,017,000, or an increase of approximately 15 per cent when compared to the prior year.

Bermuda Airport Authority

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, included in the administration budget is a grant to the Bermuda Airport Authority in the amount of \$15,900,000, as found on page C-20. This represents an increase of \$999,000, or approximately 7 per cent from the prior year.

Mr. Chairman, the Bermuda Airport Authority currently employs 61 full-time equivalent staff, inclusive of vacancies. This team is comprised largely of Bermudian professionals who carry out highly specialised roles in delivering critical air navigation and meteorological services. Their work underpins the safe and efficient operation of our airport and ensures that Bermuda continues to meet stringent international aviation standards, from guiding aircraft safely through our

airspace to providing accurate weather forecasting. Their responsibilities are essential to ensuring that flights can land and depart safely under all conditions.

A portion of the increased expense allocation will be directed towards strengthening the Authority's workforce and ensuring its long-term sustainability. This includes progressing succession planning efforts so that valuable institutional knowledge is retained as experienced officers approach retirement and ensuring that there is a smooth transition of skills and expertise to the next generation. The Authority is also placing a strong emphasis on talent development, investing in training and professional growth opportunities to prepare Bermudians to take on these highly technical roles. This is particularly important given the ageing profile of the current workforce and the need to build a pipeline of qualified aviation professionals for the future.

In addition, funding will support the recruitment and selection of suitably qualified individuals to fill existing vacancies within aviation support services. Addressing these gaps is critical to maintaining operational capacity, avoiding disruptions and ensuring that all functions continue to operate at the highest standard. These investments are focused on maintaining safety, strengthening local expertise, and securing the long-term resilience and reliability of Bermuda's aviation services.

Bermuda Tourism Authority

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, also included in the Administration budget is a grant to the Bermuda Tourism Authority of \$19,500,000 for the 2026/27 fiscal year. And this can be found on page C-20. This amount represents a \$4 million increase, or approximately 26 per cent, compared to the prior fiscal year.

Mr. Chairman, this increased budget allocation to the Bermuda Tourism Authority [BTA] represents a targeted investment in strengthening Bermuda's tourism sector and driving greater demand, particularly during the non-summer and shoulder seasons. It reflects a strategic approach to ensuring that visitor activity is sustained throughout the year, rather than concentrated only in peak periods.

This funding will support the expansion of sales and marketing initiatives aimed at attracting a broader range of visitors and tapping into key international markets. It is especially timely given the anticipated addition of 617 new hotel rooms coming online later this year which will require increased demand generation to ensure strong occupancy levels and maximise return on investment across the sector.

In addition, the allocation will enable continued investment in high profile sporting events and other marquee experiences that elevate Bermuda's global profile. These events not only attract visitors, but also generate international media exposure, positioning

Bermuda as a premier destination for both leisure and sports tourism.

Collectively, these efforts are intended to increase visitor arrivals, extend the tourism season, and drive greater economic activity across multiple sectors, including hospitality, transport, retail, and culture. Ultimately, this investment is focused on delivering measurable returns for Bermuda, supporting job creation, and strengthening the long-term resilience and competitiveness of the tourism industry.

Mr. Chairman, the BTA's total income for the 2026/27 fiscal year is forecasted at approximately \$37 million, with approximately \$18 million generated from visitor-related fees paid by hotel guests, vacation rental occupants, and cruise ship passengers. Nearly 90 per cent of direct expenditure is dedicated to sales and marketing initiatives that drive visitation. Central to this year's business plan is productivity, efficiency, and accountability. Every dollar invested must demonstrate a measurable return.

Mr. Chairman, while total visitor arrivals declined by 9.8 per cent, total visitor spending increased by 3.5 per cent, reaching \$550 million. That distinction matters. Because what drives the economy is not simply volume; it is value. Air arrivals declined modestly, influenced by significant storm activity and reduced capacity from certain US gateway markets. Yet, per-visitor spending increased, cruise [ship] spending strengthened, and the superyacht segment delivered exceptional growth. Bermuda welcomed 119 superyachts, generating \$6.2 million in direct spending, a 64 per cent increase year over year.

Mr. Chairman, despite the headwinds, Bermuda's tourism product demonstrated resilience. Strategic diversification proved essential. Canada emerged as a standout growth market, with more than 20,000 visitors, which was up 26 per cent, and \$38.9 million in visitor spending from the Canada market, which was up 20 per cent. This growth was supported by enhanced connectivity and the commitment of airline partners.

I wish to acknowledge BermudAir, whose more recent market entry has expanded options and connectivity.

Mr. Chairman, Bermuda has seen significant private investment in its hotel product in recent years, with major upgrades across properties including Rosewood, Fairmont Hamilton Princess, the Grotto Bay [Beach Resort], Rosedon [Bermuda], and Cambridge Beaches [Resort and Spa], and others. This year, following extensive renovations, Bermuda anticipates the reopening of the Fairmont Southampton, a major expansion of room inventory and a clear signal of investor confidence.

There has also been a partnership renewal with the PGA Tour for another three years, not simply because it is prestigious, but because it delivers measurable return. The 2024 Butterfield Bermuda Championship generated \$14 million in direct on-Island

spending; \$1.35 million in donations to 60 local charities; and tens of millions in global media value.

In 2026, Bermuda will also welcome the return of the Apex SailGP and other signature events that will strengthen global visibility and drive high-value visitation.

Mr. Chairman, tourism is not a single job. It is a career economy. Through continued support of the Signature School at Sands Secondary, the expansion of the BTA+ learning platform, now offering 38 professional development courses, and the AnchorBDA City & Guilds Assured programme developed by Bermudians for Bermuda, local participation across the tourism ecosystem is strengthened.

Sustainable tourism means diversification. It means high-value growth. It means collaboration. And it means ensuring that Bermudians are prepared to lead within their own industry.

Business Unit 81060, Transportation Planning Team

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, as found on page B-235, the Transportation Planning Team section sits within the Ministry Headquarters and includes one full-time equivalent employee. The budget allocation for the 2026/27 fiscal year is \$154,000. The Transportation Planning section is responsible for managing the cruise ship operations in Bermuda, including contracts, logistics, regulations, and day-to-day coordination, to ensure continuous and efficient service delivery. It also leads key transportation projects and undertakes policy research and analysis to support the Ministry's strategic priorities and long-term planning objectives.

Mr. Chairman, in 2025, the cruise ship season began with 179 scheduled calls and a projected passenger count at 80 per cent occupancy of 475,000 passengers. One call was added mid-season. By the end of the season, 22 calls were cancelled (17 calls were due to adverse weather conditions, and 5 calls were as a result of itinerary changes), resulting in 159 actual calls, ending the season with just over 467,525 passengers. This represented a reduction of 7,475 passengers, or 1.57 per cent. Despite the cancellations, the 2025 season outperformed in passenger spending, increasing the per-person spend from \$214 per passenger to \$296 per passenger.

Mr. Chairman, the economic impact for 2025 included \$23,200,000 in passenger taxes and \$10,900,000 in transport infrastructure tax.

Additionally, other cruise ship revenue was estimated at \$7 million in cruise ship visitor fees; \$158,100,000 in combined passenger and crew spending, and \$9,600,000 in cruise line disbursement expenses locally. This culminated in an estimated total of \$208,800,000 in economic activity for 2025.

Mr. Chairman, the 2026 cruise ship schedule was first published in November of 2025, highlighting 193 calls.

Mr. Chairman, the Ministry is forecasting a similar number of cancellations as was experienced in 2025. Therefore, projections are at 90 per cent, or 174 calls in 2026, with 561,859 passengers, which is an increase of nearly 100,000 passengers over 2025.

Mr. Chairman, a very healthy economic impact to Bermuda is projected for this season as well, with \$25,600,000 in passenger taxes and \$12,900,000 in transport infrastructure tax. Additionally, other cruise ship revenue is estimated at \$7,500,000 in cruise ship visitor fees, \$191,200,000 in combined passenger and crew spending, and \$9,700,000 in cruise line disbursement expenses locally.

Mr. Chairman, current projections indicate that approximately \$246,900,000 will be injected into Bermuda's economy over the course of this summer season.

Business Unit 81065, Regulatory and Policy

Sen. Mischa Fubler: The Regulatory and Policy Unit, business unit 81065, falls under the Ministry Headquarters [HQ] and has been allocated a budget of \$470,000, as found on page B-235 of the Budget Book. This unit is staffed by four persons, namely the senior manager, two compliance officers/hotel inspectors, and one administrative assistant.

Mr. Chairman, the unit is responsible for the inspection and licensing of the tourism accommodation inventory, which includes hotels and vacation rental properties. As at January 2026, there were 45 operating licensed hotel properties, including four large resort hotels, 15 small hotels, four cottage colonies, three clubs, two vacation rental homes, six large cottages, suites and apartments, five small cottages, suites and apartments, two inns, four bed and breakfasts. The newest category, vacation rental homes, is best described as a vacation rental home, which can accommodate 10 or more guests

Mr. Chairman, the Tourism Investment Act, enacted in October 2017, is administered by the senior manager of the Tourism Regulation and Policy Unit. Applications for the Tourism Investment Orders are processed in consultation with the Attorney General's Chambers, the Office of the Tax Commissioner, and the Department of Customs. The Minister responsible for tourism ushers the application through the Cabinet and the Legislature. Upon approval and assent, the Tourism Investment Order is gazetted, thereby initiating the granted period of concessions to the applicant, the hotelier, the restaurateur, or the entrepreneur.

Mr. Chairman, the Tourism Investment Act was amended in September 2025 to provide expanded periods of tax relief, namely to

- new hotels from ten years to fifteen years;
- refurbished hotels from five years to fifteen years;
- new restaurants from three years to five years,

- existing restaurants from one year to three years; and
- attractions from one year to five years.

To date, 20 Tourism Investment Orders have been issued. This includes four attractions and three special Acts, namely the St. George's Resort Act, the Fairmont Southampton Hotel Act, and the Loren (Pink Beach and Elbow Beach) Act.

Mr. Chairman, the Vacation Rentals Act 2018 is jointly administered by the Regulatory and Policy Unit, for vacation rental properties with an annual rental value of \$22,800 and above, and the Department of Consumer Affairs, the Rent Control Section, within the Ministry of Home Affairs for vacation rental properties with an ARV below \$22,800.

This Act amended the definition of a hotel as per section 1 of the Hotels (Licensing and Control) Act of 1969 to mean a place which provides sleeping accommodation for 10 or more guests, which was increased from six or more guests. As such, a vacation rental unit is one that provides sleeping accommodation for nine or fewer guests. Vacation rental properties are required to register and secure a vacation rental certificate issued by either the Ministry responsible for Tourism or the Ministry responsible for Rent Control. To date, 69 vacation rental certificates have been issued for the registration period of 1 September 2025 through 31 August 2026.

Capital Expenditure

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the 2026/27 Capital Development Budget for the Bermuda Airport Authority totals \$3,505,000, as found on page C-7.

Mr. Chairman, the Bermuda Airport Authority will continue to oversee several ongoing and upcoming capital infrastructure initiatives related to IT and cyber resilience, structural health and safety improvements, and aviation and weather services equipment upgrades using the capital funding as mentioned earlier. These include, but are not limited to

- infrastructure health and safety improvements;
- phase one of the weather radar upgrades;
- firewall server and technology access point upgrades;
- hydrogen gas generator design and survey; and
- Phase 2 of the Cyber implementation.

Manpower

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, as seen on page B-236, there will be a total of 14 full-time equivalent employees in the Ministry Headquarters, Head 71, which represents an increase of one in comparison to the 2025/26 fiscal year.

Performance Measures by Business Unit

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that the department's forecasted performance measures found on page B-237 for fiscal year 2025/26 were achieved and they detail as follows.

Business Unit 81000, Administration

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit is responsible for the strategic, policy development, accounting support for the Ministry. Under this business unit, the performance measures for 2025/26 were all completed. However, due to the expanded role and portfolio of the Ministry, it [became] necessary to discontinue those measures and replace them with the following new performance measures for 2026/27, for which the target date of completion for both is March 2027 (or the end of the fiscal year):

- completion of the Electric Vehicle Policy; and
- completion of the National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Policy.

Business Unit 81065, Regulatory and Policy Unit

Sen. Mischa Fubler: As mentioned prior, this business unit oversees the end-to-end handling of tourism investment relief applications from intake to implementation. It also carries out inspections of hotels and vacation rentals to ensure they meet regulatory standards and compliance requirements.

The performance measures for 2025/26 included ensuring hotel and vacation rental properties are inspected and licensed by the annual deadline of the 31 March and 31 August, respectively. Hotel and vacation rental complaints are acknowledged within 24 hours of receipt, and hotel and vacation rental complaints are investigated within 48 hours of receipt and ensuring final report of hotel and vacation rental complaints are issued within 10 days of complaint. All forecasted outcomes were successfully achieved.

Plans for the Upcoming Year

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the Ministry [Headquarters] will continue to serve as the strategic and policy hub for the Ministry, providing clear leadership and coordination across its departments and quangos. Our focus is on ensuring Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sport all work closely together, building stronger synergies, advancing key priorities, strengthening governance, and maintaining sound fiscal management.

In the year ahead, we will build on the success of this past year while continuing to deliver practical results for the people of Bermuda. We are committed to cutting unnecessary red tape, streamlining processes, improving collaboration, and using data to guide smart decision-making so that services are efficient, responsive, and forward-looking.

Mr. Chairman, Headquarters will also continue to lead and support the 28 boards, committees, and authorities that carry out their legislative responsibilities and community initiatives. These bodies play a vital role in our national development and through strong guidance, accountability, and partnership with HQ, their work will continue to strengthen our communities and help build a stronger, better Bermuda for everyone.

Mr. Chairman, a strong focus will remain on building Bermuda's events and entertainment landscape, with 38 recipients receiving funding support to help bring diverse and dynamic experiences to our Island. These investments ensure that Bermuda remains vibrant, culturally rich, and attractive to both residents and visitors alike. From community festivals and sporting events to cultural showcases and live entertainment, this support stimulates economic activity, creates opportunities for local entrepreneurs and artists, and enhances the overall energy of our Island. By continuing to back these initiatives, Bermuda's reputation is reinforced as a lively, welcoming, and engaging destination year-round.

Mr. Chairman, the Bermuda National Events and Entertainment Committee has recently been established to bring people around the table and take a more coordinated, practical approach to how events are planned and supported across the Island. The goal is simple: To make sure we are working together, not in silos, and that the events calendar makes sense for Bermuda.

One of the committee's first priorities has been completing a clear and easy-to-follow Bermuda events and entertainment calendar. This will help organisers avoid clashes, give businesses time to prepare, and allow us to better promote what is happening on the Island throughout the year. At its heart, this is about supporting our community, giving local talent and promoters the platform they deserve, and keeping Bermuda active, energised, and full of life year-round.

Mr. Chairman, the Bermuda Airport Authority will continue to oversee several ongoing and upcoming infrastructure initiatives related to aviation and weather services, using the capital funding mentioned earlier. These include, but are not limited to

- Aeronautical Information Services, moving to Aeronautical Information Management organisational transition;
- Air Traffic Engineering infrastructure upgrades;
- Bermuda Weather Service weather radar radome refurbishment and resealing;
- Bermuda Weather Service application programming interface (API);
- Bermuda Weather Service's website design;
- Bermuda Weather Service's hydrogen gas generator phase one; and the
- Cyber Security Systems infrastructure upgrades.

Mr. Chairman, in the tourism sector the Bermuda Tourism Authority [BTA] will build upon the

foundation established for geographic diversification and reduce its overall reliance on any single region into the visitor pipeline. Beginning in the first quarter, 2026/27, the BTA will lead a series of regional activations across the US northeast in partnership with a strong group of hotel and on-Island experience partners.

Mr. Chairman, these roadshows will directly engage travel advisors, corporate planners, and media, ensuring Bermuda remains competitive and top of mind.

Sales and marketing efforts will expand to support hundreds of new rooms coming online over the next two years, with a focus on

- driving year-round demand;
- leveraging technology and AI to target the right visitor at the right time;
- reducing the cost of visitor acquisition;
- growing high-quality group and incentive travel;
- expanding presence in the UK luxury market;
- continuing investment in the superyacht segment to attract high net worth and ultra-high net worth visitors.

All of this will operate within a disciplined, transparent accountability framework where performance and productivity are paramount.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to thank the dedicated teams at Head 71 Ministry Headquarters, and the authorities under the Ministry for their hard work and their solid commitment to the Ministry and its mandate.

Mr. Chairman, that concludes Head 71, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport HQ.

I will pause here to solicit questions, concerns or comments from my colleagues.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Fubler.

Would any Senator wish to ask any questions on this?

Yes, Senator Smith, over to you. Thank you.

Sen. Tarik Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and good morning to the listening audience and my fellow Senate colleagues.

First of all, let me also send my thanks to the Junior Minister, the Minister, and his team for such an informative brief. First, let me declare that my family business, Bermuda Commercial Laundry, which I operate with my father benefits directly from this tourism market. I am also a taxi and a limo operator, and we are the first line in the queue when it comes to reaching and talking with our visitors.

I, myself, have fond memories of a Mr. 'Rip' Simons and Banana Beach Club on South Shore, which was a major tourist attraction in the 1980s. I remember as a young boy seeing Astwood Walk Beach (now known today as Southlands) being packed with many, many visitors that came to see our wonderful Island.

My job in the summer of 1997 was also working in the tourism industry for Mr. David Dodwell, [Sr.], then Minister of Tourism at The Reefs Hotel. Even today, as I speak with our guests about our Island with tremendous pride, tourism is the backbone of what makes Bermuda so revered worldwide as one of the most beautiful, friendly, clean places on earth.

Tourism matters, Mr. Chairman, and using the funds expressed on Head 71 is important to the tourism product. I have a few questions for the Junior Minister, if he would.

I see the development objective found on page B-[2]34. A question: Objective number three says to *support the continued delivery of an air service development plan for Bermuda*. Listening back to the debate from another place, can you expand on what the actual plan is for this objective? We have heard about the fact that they are travelling to various conferences around the globe representing Bermuda and hoping to increase air capacity for 2026/27. However, are there measurable goals for this committee? How are we measuring their success? Is there a plan that they are working towards that you can share?

It was shared that this committee is made up of four people. Is there a budget set for this committee? And if there is, what is the allocated compensation? Is this outlined in the budget somewhere? If the entire budget is not allocated to compensation, what other items does it cover?

Going to page B-237, under performance measures, Regulatory and Policy number . . . item line 81065, targeted outcome for hotels is 90 per cent of the hotels to be inspected twice a year. Wouldn't we want all 45 hotels to be inspected annually? How large are the teams who inspect the hotels? And why are we not trying to reach a goal of 100 per cent, as the target outcome is 90 per cent? Tourism is a main source of revenue, according to the goals and objectives set by this department, which is to maintain the national standard. I would like to believe that we should be inspecting 100 per cent of the properties. Could the Junior Minister please advise what the national standard is?

Going back to page B-235, Subjective Analysis of Current Account Estimates under Training. In 2024, there appeared to be no budget for training. However, a notable increase was made in 2025, and this is expected to be maintained at \$23,000 for 2026/27. Question: How many people are being trained? Does the certification need to be renewed annually? Is everyone taking the same certification, or are there levels of diversification on who is trained under what?

Staying with [page] B-235, Subjective Analysis of the Current [Account] Estimates [for] Travel, we note that there has been an increase from 2024/25, of \$36,000, to 2025/26, into 2026/27, in the amount of \$56,000, bringing the total allocated budget to \$92,000. Is this increase solely due to the consolidation of two heads (48 and 71) back in February 2025? How many technical officers are being afforded the opportunity to

travel? [Are] there guidelines or restrictions around the class of travel? For example, if they are travelling under six hours, will they be travelling in economy class versus travelling for more than six hours in business or a higher class?

Similarly, on [page] B-235, Subjective Analysis [of] Current [Account] Estimates for Professional Services, there is a \$761,000 increase from 2024 to 2026/27. Is this also a result of the consolidated heads? And how many consultants are there under professional services? Is this all budgeted for compensation? Are there any contracts . . . sorry, are these contracts annual, or are they multi-year agreements? How many of these contracts are Bermudian versus non-Bermudian?

The Chairman: Senator Smith, maybe I can just ask whether the Junior Minister would care to . . . you have asked a lot of questions thus far. Should we . . . Senator Fubler, would you like for us to pause for you and your team to be able to respond to some of the questions that have been asked thus far?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: I am awaiting responses from the technical officers. Maybe I will take this opportunity to restate the questions to ensure I have captured them all. There are quite a few there. And then also, as per the previous approach, maybe I move on to the next head, and then we come back when the responses are available, if that works. Yes? Okay, cool.

And so, I have the development objective on . . . objective three on page B-[2]34. Can you expand on what the actual plan is for this objective? Are there measurable goals for the committee, i.e., how are we measuring success? So, the question for that same committee was, is their budget set? And what is the budget set for compensation? And if not, what other items does the budget cover?

On page B-237, under performance measures, why are the hotels not all inspected, so 100 per cent? The target is 90 per cent of the inspections by the deadline. I want to point out that the measure there is specifically by those deadlines. How large are the inspection teams? And I can answer that one right away, because that was in my brief. We have two in that policy unit who do the inspections. And the question for the target, I will await the response from the technical officers. What is the national standard for inspections was another question.

[Page] B-235, in 2024 there was no budget for training, but there was a notable change in 2025. How many people are being trained? Does the certification need to be renewed annually? And is everyone taking the same certification?

There was a question around how many technical officers will be travelling, as per the budget line item on travel. And in relation to that line item, Is the increase due to the consolidation of the heads? This is comparing the 2024 actuals to 2026/27 projected. And

yes, some portion of it is that. But then I will leave it to technical officers to give them a fulsome response.

Is there a standard for the travel . . . and kind of around, as an example if the travel duration is less than six hours, is that I guess a certain class of ticketing allowed versus longer travel? I guess, ultimately looking for kind of what the travel policy is, as it were.

And professional services increase for the 2024 actuals versus the 2026/27 projected. Is this related to the Ministry consolidation? And how many consultants are there? And are these contracts on a yearly basis? Maybe we can expand there. I think we might have missed part of that question, Mr. Chairman.

Oh, sorry . . . and one more, just before you can put that to my colleague. And how many of the contracts are for Bermudian versus non-Bermudians in the professional services line item?

The Chairman: Yes. So, Senator Fubler, would you . . . in terms of proceeding forward, should we ask other Senators if they have questions? And then you and your team can either respond at the end of the questions or . . . I think your preference may be to wait until the end of the other two Ministries (is that correct?) to have all the questions [asked]?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Sure. I think at the very least we should solicit other comments, questions, and confirmation that what I restated was accurate as the technical team endeavours to provide those answers.

Sen. Tarik Smith: Yes. So far, that was pretty accurate. I do have a couple more questions.

I have three more questions, a couple supplementals, of course, in those questions.

Is it okay if I proceed?

The Chairman: Senator Smith, why don't you proceed with completing your questions, and then I can ask any other Senator if they have any questions of their own.

So, please proceed.

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

Moving on, Mr. Chairman, [page] B-236, Revenue Summary, number 8090, Vacation Rental Fee. I understand the projected revenue is in anticipation of full compliance of vacation rentals. What is the current percentage of hotels and vacation rentals that are compliant versus those that are not compliant? What is the consequence or penalty if they are not compliant? Is there a grace period as well if they do not meet the standards? Are there noncompliant establishments [among] the 45 that are currently licensed? Is compliance necessary in order to be considered licensed?

There are no performance measures for 81060, Transport Planning Team of one. Why [are] there no performance measures for this team of one? With a budget of \$154,000, which is an increase [of] \$7,000 from 2025, I would expect for there to be some

performance measures, maybe I missed them, or KPIs, goals that would be measurable for this business unit.

How much of this business . . . budget, sorry, is allocated to this compensation? On the remaining budget, what is the rest of the budget allocated to? Is there or will there be consideration to increase the members of this team from a team of one? What led to the creation of this team of one? Cruise ships did not start coming here in 2025. Since the creation of this team of one, can you give an idea of what economic impact, positive or otherwise, has been realised since the position was created? What was the total estimate of economic activity in 2023 or 2024, which predates the creation of this team?

Finally, bear with me, Senator Fubler, I mean, sorry, Junior Minister Fubler, I was interested to hear about the Bermuda National Events and Entertainment Committee [BNEEC], which was recently established in the fourth quarter of 2025. From this, I believe 38 people have received funding to . . . well, a group has received funding to bring diverse and dynamic experiences. What really does that entail? Is there a budget for this committee, and how much has been allocated, and where can we find this in the 2026 national calendar? On gov.bm, it outlines that the final release of the 2026 calendar should have been on 31 December 2025. Can you direct the listening public to where the calendar is, please?

Thank you in advance, Junior Minister, for your consideration of these questions.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Smith.

Would any other Senator care to ask a question?

Yes, Senator Tannock, over to you.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Thank you. Good morning, [Mr. Chairman], and thank you, Senator Fubler, Junior Minister Fubler.

Now, you want questions for Head 71, correct?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Correct.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Okay, I will stick to the brief. I will stick to the brief.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Sen. Tawana Tannock: So, my first question is regarding the \$37 million income that you indicated that the BTA had. Can you tell me if that income was gross or net? That's my first question.

And can you tell me also (following on the back of that) the total amount that the board of the BTA is paid annually? And following on from that, can you tell me how that compares to the payment of people in other government bodies?

I also have a second question about the \$4 million in increase that the BTA will receive. Do you have

any indication? I know when I have asked about the BTA previously in the Senate, I was told that the Government doesn't know because the BTA has an independent board. But given that the Government is giving the BTA \$4 million, do you have any indication of how the BTA, the board, intends to allocate that \$4 million? Has the Government asked the BTA board for any ROIs? So, has the Government asked the BTA board to provide them with any return on investment markers? And if so, when will they be provided for that \$4 million?

So, has the Government asked the BTA for any indication or return on investment or indicators that that \$4 million has actually . . . well, return on the investment? And if so, what did the Government ask us [those metrics] and when does the Government expect to receive it?

So, I had a question about the Tourism and City & Guilds qualification. I did not understand. Is that qualification being given to people in the industry or is it being given in the senior school in the Signature programme? I didn't understand it. If it's in the Signature programme, I wanted to know when it started and how many students have taken it. Or, if it is a course that has been completed, how many have completed it? And also, who is providing the instruction?

Sorry, I did have one other question about the BTA board, and it is, How does Government ensure that the BTA board members (who are appointed) are providing added value for the . . . whatever fee that you are going to tell me that they make?

I do have some questions regarding acquisitions on page C-14 [*sic*]. And this goes back to, I think our initial information regarding the Bermuda Airport Authority. So, I just have a question. I see that under Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sport Headquarters, 7099 Bermuda Airport Authority, it looks like the estimated budget for the Airport Authority is \$15,900,000. And then we see the Ministry of Transport Headquarters, and we see the Airport Authority listed down again on 7099 Bermuda Airport Authority with another figure of \$14,794[,000]. So, I should have mentioned when it was first listed, the actual for 2024/25 was zero and then it goes to 2025/26, \$14,901[,000], 2025/26 revised, \$14,901[,000]. Estimate for 2026/27, \$15,9[00,000].

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. Tawana Tannock: On page C-20. I mentioned that we were going to acquisitions.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: I think [page] C-14, you had mentioned—

[Inaudible interjections]

Sen. Tawana Tannock: [Page] C-20, C-20, C-20, my apologies.

And then if you go down to 70 . . . so you want me to repeat it?

Okay. So, on [page] C-20, the Bermuda Airport Authority is listed twice. So, we have it listed once as a line item under Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Culture, and Sport Headquarters, 7099 Bermuda Airport Authority. Actual estimate for grants and contributions from the Ministry, zero for 2024/25. And then we see in 2025/26, \$14.9 [million]. And then we see that that revised estimate was confirmed to be \$14.9 [million]. And now in 2025/26, we see \$15.9 [million]. So, then when we come down, we see it's listed again for Ministry of Transport at 7099 Bermuda Airport Authority and that the actual estimate for 2024/25 was \$14.794 [million]. And then we don't see anything else on that line item. So, my question is, why is it repeated twice? That's my question for that.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Point of information, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes, do you accept the point of information, Senator?

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Yes, yes, definitely.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Sen. Mischa Fubler: This is this to head this one off, so the team is not transcribing. As I mentioned in the brief, we consolidated. So, in 2024/25, there would have been the Ministry of Transport who had the grant of \$14.79 million.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Okay.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: And then when we moved it into the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport in 2025, you then see that that amount is moved into the 2025/26 estimate. We have a revised estimate there, three quarters of the way through the year, whenever that mid-year budget review is. And now our new estimate for 2026/27 is \$15.9 million. And as I also mentioned, there will be no more allocation in the Ministry of Transport because that no longer exists as a discrete head.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Okay, thank you. That's very helpful. I appreciate that.

The Chairman: Senator Tannock, any more questions?

Sen. Tawana Tannock: On that head, no. I don't think I can read my notes.

[Laughter]

Sen. Tawana Tannock: So, on that head, no.

The Chairman: Okay. Well, with that, we can move on to Senator Cunningham, who has her hand up.
Senator Cunningham, over to you.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I am in agreement with my colleague about the importance of tourism. I actually . . . because I know a lot of people wonder my familial background, I will give you a sneak peek that I spent my first 21 years in hotels on this Island, coming to visit my family—and [in] small guest houses. But anyway . . . so, yes, I grew up loving the tourism product.

And with that, with the BTA \$19.5 million grant, my question is, we have talked about the Ministry HQ being the central engine for leadership/oversight/ strategy. How much oversight do they have over the BTA? And what accountability does the BTA have in the Ministry HQ's department objectives as it relates to tourism? So, the BTA, obviously, we have mentioned, is independent, but talks about, you know, geographic diversification and all the rest of it. How much of that is driven by direction from the HQ?

Secondly, you mentioned the parish councils, and I see on page C-20 that that is remaining flat at \$70,000 as the estimate for this year, with the recent amendment to the . . . I can't remember what the Bill was called, but the fee . . . the . . .

Sen. Mischa Fubler: The board fees and the like.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Yes, the board fees and the like. Have these been taken into account within that \$70,000? And in fact, within any of those Authorities that you mentioned, if any of them have fees for sitting on boards.

I was also a little confused when you were talking about the Transportation Planning Team, and you talked about 2025 with 179 scheduled cruise visits. And I believe you said you were estimating at 80 per cent occupancy, that would be 475,000 passengers.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Point of clarification, Mr. Chairman?

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Yes.

The Chairman: Yes, a point of clarification.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Sen. Mischa Fubler: For the previous year, the estimate was the 80 per cent. For this year, we're estimating 90 per cent.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Okay, that was my question. I just . . . I saw it as different metrics, so I just wanted clarification. Thank you very much.

And then my final question on the performance measures is . . . and this goes to quite a lot of the performance measures in this [Budget] Book, but, you know, we are getting percentages. It would be helpful to know, for example, how many hotel complaints there were. If we are at 100 per cent, how many hotel complaints were there? Was it 5, or was it 50? Was it 200?

And then the vacation rentals, you mentioned that 69 certificates had been issued, which suggests to me that there are 69 compliant vacation rentals under nine beds, or nine guests . . . nine or less guests. Has that number, I guess, risen or fallen? So then how do you know vacation rental properties inspected and licensed by the annual deadline of 31 August, if you don't know all of the vacation rentals?

And with that, I will . . .

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

Yes, Senator Rogers, do you have a question?

Sen. David Rogers: Yes. Good morning, everyone. Good morning, listening public. Good morning, fellow Senators and [Mr.] Chairman.

What I have here under the Tourism head, the Ministry's objective for Head 71 talks about fostering increased collaboration between culture, sports, and tourism sectors to drive economic growth and innovation, and nurturing young local talent while expanding access to culture and sports opportunities. Yet, when we look at the estimates, what we actually see is a very different picture in the way the money is structured and controlled.

So, Head 71 itself, the Ministry of Tourism, Transport, Culture and Sports HQ, is overwhelmingly a central grant-funding machine, it would seem. Current expenditures jump from \$18 million to \$39 million. Within that, grants and contributions rose from \$17 million to \$36 million, making up almost the entirety of the increase and dwarfing salaries and operational costs.

At the same time, the operational arms remain in different silos. So, you have Sports, that's Head 20. It has its own budget, \$10 million. You have Ports, that's Head 30, [with] its own budget of \$24 million. The Public Transportation Head has its own budget; the Department of Culture Head . . . each with their own staff objectives and performance measures. I couldn't find in the Budget Book identified cross-Ministry programme lines that span multiple heads. The estimates do not label any specific Tourism, Culture, Sports joint initiatives, or shared programme codes, or any sort of ring-fence funds that would be used for events or youth pipelines that would link school-age sports to cultural, to tourism, to employment. So, there's a lot of rhetoric—

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Point of order, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Sen. Mischa Fubler: It does appear that Senator Rogers is inadvertently misleading the [Senate] as we have only debated the Ministry HQ. And as requested by the Opposition, I intend to move on to the Department of Sport when we arrive at that point in the debate.

Sen. David Rogers: The point of order is taken.
I was only using it as a contrast to say that I don't see . . . how to say . . . cross-Ministry initiatives labelled anywhere. It's not to debate those heads.

The Chairman: Senator, let's move on to your next question.

Sen. David Rogers: Yes.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Mr. Chairman, before we move on, I would ask that the Senator remove the language. He could rephrase it; but he is suggesting rhetoric. And I think that that's some politically charged language, which has no place when we are going through simple Headquarters budgets.

Sen. David Rogers: I would also take that criticism. How do I say it? It is the intention of the objective that I am speaking to, not necessarily political rhetoric.

The Chairman: Okay . . . Senator, let's move on with your next question.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you.

Sen. David Rogers: Yes, let me just get to the actual question. Against this backdrop, can the Minister point to any cross-Ministry programmes funded in the budget? If so, can he identify those budget lines and name those initiatives? You know, a genuine tie to Tourism, Culture and Sport in practical terms rather than just in mission-statement language? And for each programme, can he identify where the funding appears and what measurable outcomes would be used to evaluate those cross-Ministry, cross-head fundings?

The Chairman: Is that your last question?

Sen. David Rogers: That's my question.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Okay, so I think we have got . . . thank you, the technical officers will be very busy over the next few minutes responding to those many questions that were posed to the Junior Minister.

I think with that, Junior Minister, if it's okay with you, we can move on to Marine and Ports. And as you suggested previously, we can wait until the completion of Marine and Ports and Sports and Recreation before responding to the questions for all three of those Ministries.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: I will proceed as directed, Mr. Chairman.

Moving on, I actually have next up, Head 20, the Department of Sport and Recreation, if you could be so obliged.

The Chairman: Very good. Thank you, Junior Minister. Please proceed.

**HEAD 20—DEPARTMENT OF SPORT
AND RECREATION**

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, it gives me great pleasure again to present the budget for Head 20, the Department of Sport and Recreation, found on pages B-238 through B-243 of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure Book. This budget invests in growing participation, supporting elite athletes, and ensuring our recreational facilities and programmes continue to thrive.

Mission Statement

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the mission statement is found on page B-238 and it is as follows: *To foster a vibrant sports and recreation culture in Bermuda by increasing participation, achieving regional excellence, and ensuring equitable access to sports and recreational facilities. Through collaboration, we aim to inspire and develop young talent, promote community well-being and elevate the value of sports and recreation in our society.*

Expenditure Overview

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, as found on pages B-239 through B-240, a total of \$10,708,000 has been allocated for this head. This represents an increase of \$760,000, or 8 per cent, from the previous year. This change is due primarily to the increase in operational grants for the public golf courses and to the negotiated salaries and wage uplifts for employees.

Mr. Chairman, as found on page B-239, General Summary Expenditure, this amount is broken down by business unit, and will now be expanded upon:

Business Unit 30025, School Sports Events

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for this business unit is \$85,000, representing a \$42,000, or 98 per cent, increase from the previous year. This business unit represents the allocated

funding dedicated to supporting school sports across the Island.

Following one full year of School Sports being placed under the department's remit, a comprehensive review has identified the need for increased investment to strengthen programme delivery, enhance safeguarding and operational standards, expand participation opportunities, and ensure long-term sustainability. Investment in school sports lays a vital foundation for the continued growth of Bermuda's sporting culture and supports the long-term development of national athletes.

Business Unit 30045, General Administration

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for this business unit is \$974,000. This represents a decrease of \$17,000, or approximately 2 per cent. This decrease is due to reallocating the housing allowance assigned to the caretakers of the Government Recreation Islands. The allocated funds provide for the administration and operations of the Department of Sport and Recreation's Headquarters. In addition, the administrative section provides administrative support for five programmes within the department and is responsible for monitoring departmental spending to ensure that policies and procedures are adhered to in achieving efficiency and effectiveness.

Business Unit 30055, Sports Programmes

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for this business unit is \$690,000. This reflects an increase of \$32,000, or approximately 5 per cent when compared to the prior fiscal year. The increase is primarily attributable to the negotiated salaries and wage uplifts for employees. The allocated funding also supports the planning and delivery of key annual initiatives, including the [National] Sports Awards and National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme ceremonies, as well as the ongoing delivery of the Active Kids Programme.

Business Unit 30065, Sports Investment

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit is focused on demonstrating how the Bermuda Government supports and invests in the community through sport. The department is currently in the fourth year of implementing the 2022–2027 National Sports Policy [NSP]. This funding supports strategic sport development initiatives, strengthens National Sports Governing Bodies (NSGBs), and advances participation, athlete development, and community engagement across Bermuda.

Mr. Chairman, to support the continued delivery of NSGBs' objectives, business unit 30065 has been allocated a total budget of \$2,120,000. This represents an increase of \$14,000, or approximately 1 per cent, compared to the prior fiscal year.

This increase will be allocated directly to the Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Authority (BSADA), to assist with the rising costs associated with athlete testing, particularly for Bermudian athletes training and competing overseas. BSADA is a statutory body mandated to ensure Bermuda's athletes meet international anti-doping standards and remain eligible to compete at the highest levels of sport.

Mr. Chairman, funds within this business unit are also allocated through the Sports Investment Programme [SIP], which provides financial assistance to National Sports Governing Bodies to support sport development initiatives, including Coach Education, Junior Development, and High-Performance programmes.

For the upcoming funding cycle, 25 sporting bodies have submitted applications for funding support. Additionally, this business unit provides funding toward the Bermuda Olympic Association's [BOA] operational expenses, enabling the administrative functions necessary to facilitate Bermuda's participation in international sporting events and competitions.

Mr. Chairman, during fiscal year 2026/27, the Department of Sport and Recreation, in partnership with our recognised National Sports Governing Bodies, intend to continue to implement objectives of National Sport Policy, specifically as it relates to Long-Term Athlete Development Plan.

Business Unit 30030, Athletic Awards

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for this business unit is \$360,000, which is a decrease of \$50,000, or 12 per cent, compared to the prior fiscal year. However, this decrease represents a reallocation in funds to support business unit 30025, School Sports, enhancing the delivery and development of school sports events.

Mr. Chairman, this business unit provides funding to support elite athletic development, including financial contributions through the Bermuda Olympic Association and the Department's Elite Athlete Sponsorship Programme. Additionally, the unit facilitates performance-based recognition in the Outstanding Performance Incentive Programme, rewarding elite athletes for exceptional achievements in sport.

Mr. Chairman, during the 2025/26 fiscal year, the department supported 27 elite athletes. Among these recipients were Junior Male Athletes of the Year, Elijah Daley, for swimming, and David Maycock, for bowling. Both athletes have represented Bermuda with distinction, and the department is proud to support and be part of their continued sporting development and success. Additionally, in the 2025/26 fiscal year, Ryan Outerbridge was the recipient of the [Dame] Flora Duffy Award, receiving \$10,000 in support of his continued pursuit of excellence in track and field.

In addition, this business unit also funds the National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme (NJASP), which financially supports the development

of Bermudian junior athletes aged 15 to 19. This support aims to develop future elite athletes who will represent Bermuda at major international competitions.

Business Unit 30060, Sports Facilities

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the budget estimate for this business unit is \$3,211,000. This is an increase of \$571,000, or 22 per cent. The majority of this budget increase reflects additional funding of \$560,000 toward the operational budget of the Government's public golf courses at Port Royal and Ocean View.

Similar to the School Sports unit, following one full year of the government golf courses being placed under the department's remit, a comprehensive review identified the need for additional funding to support operational requirements. This funding will enhance accessibility and affordability of public golf [course] opportunities, while maintaining high service standards and facility quality. The remaining balance of the increase will support the negotiated salary uplifts for employees.

Business Unit 30075, WMC Preece Softball Park

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit has been allocated \$160,000. This is an increase of \$11,000, or 7 per cent, from the prior year. This business unit supports the salaries and wages of staff, as well as the operational and maintenance requirements of the softball diamond. The increase is primarily attributable to the negotiated salaries and wages uplifts for employees.

Business Unit 30080, WER Joell Tennis Stadium

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit has been allocated \$484,000. This reflects an increase of \$22,000, or approximately 5 per cent, compared to the prior fiscal year.

The increase is primarily attributable to the negotiated salaries and wages uplifts for employees. This business unit supports the salaries and wages of facility staff, as well as the operational and maintenance requirements of the tennis stadium. The facility serves as a key national sporting venue, providing public access to seven tennis courts and eight pickleball courts, and plays an important role in supporting community recreation, athlete development, and the hosting of local, regional, and international sporting events.

Business Unit 30090, Motor Sport Park

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit has been allocated \$8,000. There is no change in budget funding to this business unit from the 2025/26 budget. The funds are used for insurance, maintenance, and water at the Motor Sport Park.

Business Unit 30390, Sports Community Fields

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit has been allocated \$47,000. There is no change from 2025/26 estimate. The funds for this unit are allocated for the maintenance and operation of the community fields under the department's remit.

These investments help to ensure that every Bermudian has a place to play, every Bermudian has a place to train, and gather, in an open and clean recreation area.

Programme 2007, Camping

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, business unit 30148 Camping Administration has been allocated \$214,000. This is an increase of \$15,000, or 8 per cent, from the prior year. The allocated funds provide for the administration and operations of the Department of Sport and Recreation's Camping Unit. The increase is primarily attributable to the negotiated salaries and wage uplifts for employees.

Mr. Chairman, to improve operational efficiency and financial oversight, the department has consolidated four previous business units, namely—30150 Darrell's Island, 30160 Paget Island, 30165 Ports Island, and 30170 White's Island—into a single business unit, now titled 30150 Recreation Islands. This consolidation allows for more effective management and allocation of funds across these business units, supports streamlined administration, and enhances overall financial monitoring and operational coordination.

The combined budget is \$903,000 and represents an increase of \$574,000, or 174 per cent, from the prior fiscal year. It must be noted that this increase is primarily attributable to the negotiated salaries and wages uplifts for employees and the reallocation of the housing allowance for the caretakers of the islands from business unit 30045. This allocation supports 10 full-time staff managing approximately 80 acres of land, facilities, and marine equipment.

Business Unit 30180, Recreational Programmes

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the budget allocation for this business unit is \$1,452,000 and represents an increase of \$33,000, or 2 per cent, from the prior fiscal year. This adjustment primarily supports salary alignments to ensure that the programme remains competitive within the current market. By providing market-aligned compensation, the department aims to attract trained and committed programme staff, enabling the delivery of high-quality supervision, care, and mentorship to Bermuda's most vulnerable—our youth.

Subjective Analysis

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the Subjective Analysis of Current Account Estimates of the Department of Sport and Recreation is found on page B-240.

I will highlight a few of the material object code descriptions:

- Salaries and Wages combined, increased by \$152,000, or approximately 10 per cent, from the prior fiscal year. These increases are primarily due to negotiated salaries and wages uplifts.
- Training increased by \$4,000, or 31 per cent, due to staff training required for the upcoming year. All Summer Day Camp staff and Camp Connect Programme personnel will be offered structured online safeguarding training workshops to strengthen safeguarding awareness and best practices.
- Grants and Contributions increased by \$524,000, or 11 per cent, from the prior year. This is mainly due to the increase in the operational grant of the government golf courses.

This allocation will enhance public access to affordable golf opportunities and sustain the high operational and facility standards at government golf courses.

Capital Development Expenditure

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the capital development estimate for the department can be found on page C-7 and is \$3,416,000. This capital funding will be used to maintain and enhance the facilities at Ocean View Golf Course, Port Royal Golf Course, and the National Sports Centre.

Capital Acquisition Expenditure

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the capital acquisition estimate for the department can be found on page C-14 and is \$69,000. This capital funding is allocated for the purchase of a replacement runabout boat to support the caretakers responsible for the Government Islands.

Personnel

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, as found on page B-241, the Department of Sport and Recreation administers five programmes and 13 business units that encompasses 46 full-time equivalent personnel. This remains unchanged from the prior fiscal year 2025/26.

Performance Measures by Business Unit

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that most of the department's forecasted performance measures for fiscal year 2025/26 were achieved. The performance measures for the Department of Sport and Recreation can be found on pages B-242 and B-243.

Business Unit 30030, Athletic Awards

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit supports the delivery of the Athletic Awards administered by the department. During the 2025/26 fiscal year, 16 National Sport Governing Bodies received funding through the National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme, with an average award of \$3,000 allocated to each NSGB to support the development of junior athletes.

Business Unit 30065, Sports Investment Programme

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the department requires all National Sport Governing Bodies to maintain compliance with established policies, reporting requirements, and governance standards. During the 2025/26 fiscal year, 28 National Sport Governing Bodies were formally recognised by the department. Of these, 26 recognised NSGBs have submitted funding applications for the 2026/27 fiscal year to support the continued development of their respective sports. These applications focus on key priority areas including junior athlete programming, coaching and officials' development, and high-performance initiatives aimed at strengthening Bermuda's sporting pathway and international competitiveness.

Business Unit 30075, WMC Preece Softball Park

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, next up we have business unit 30075, the WMC Preece Softball Park, where our target of 500 participants was reached. The continued field usage by youth baseball has made the facility more user-friendly and appealing.

I commend the dedicated staff at the softball diamond and Softball Bermuda for their continued efforts in making softball once again a thriving option as a recreational sport of choice in Bermuda.

Business Unit 30080, WER Joell Tennis Stadium

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit is responsible for the [WER Joell] Tennis Stadium, where the average monthly usage target was surpassed with approximately 897 individuals utilising the facility each month. This growth is largely attributed to the installation of new lighting on Courts 1 through 3, which has extended playing hours, as well as the continued rise in popularity of pickleball within the community. The department has also experienced an increase in the percentage of users who rated the facility as satisfactory or better over the last fiscal year, rising from 50 per cent in 2024/25 to approximately 77 per cent in 2025/26.

Business Unit 30150, Camping Facilities

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, this business unit is responsible for the government camping facilities,

which continue to experience strong public demand, with annual bookings typically selling out within the first week of applications opening.

Although overall facility usage declined over the past year from 5,735 to 3,460, this decrease was primarily due to necessary renovations and infrastructure upgrades at several sites, in particular the significant infrastructure upgrades to bathroom facilities at Darrell's Island, which required the site to be closed for several months. Additional essential improvements, including upgrades to docks on two islands, were undertaken to enhance safety, functionality, and the overall user experience.

Mr. Chairman, despite these temporary impacts, the department remains committed to providing safe, enjoyable, and customer-focused recreation spaces that offer year-round camping opportunities for the Bermuda public, particularly during holiday periods. This commitment is reflected in strong user feedback, with 93 per cent of users reporting overall satisfaction with their experience.

Business Unit 30180, Recreational Programmes

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, when we speak about return on investment, Camp Connect has delivered. Since the launch of Camp Connect three years ago, participation has nearly tripled, addressing the community's demand for affordable, safe, and high-quality summer programming. This business unit has seen a dramatic enrolment surge, growing from 1,700 to 4,333 participants over the last three years.

This increase of 155 per cent reflects the high demand for safe, affordable child care and shows how vital collaboration with private operators can assist in meeting this mandate. The programme's success is underscored by an 88 per cent satisfaction rate, with 98 per cent of users intending to return.

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

Plans for the Upcoming Year

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, in the upcoming fiscal year 2026/27, school sports programmes will deliver a comprehensive calendar of events designed to promote participation, learning and competition among students. These include 12 primary school festivals which introduces students to new sports through fun and engaging learning experiences, 26 inter-school leagues, 58 tournaments/meets, and 13 all-star matches spanning four different sports.

Mr. Chairman, by providing structured opportunities for competition and skill development, this programme supports the government's broader objectives of promoting health and wellness, enhancing educational outcomes, empowering youth, and strengthening

community engagement. These outcomes directly align with the priorities outlined in the National Sports Policy, particularly increasing participation, fostering athlete development pathways, and enhancing the overall value of sport within the community.

The Department of Sport and Recreation will continue to advance and fulfil the policy goals and objectives outlined in the National Sports Policy "Sport Matters." Commitment remains focused on strengthening Bermuda's sport system and creating sustainable pathways for athlete and sport development.

Mr. Chairman, central to this process is the continued partnership with the National Sport Governing Bodies. These partnerships remain critical in providing structured and inclusive platforms that allow for the ongoing evaluation, development, and support of sports programmes and athletes at all levels. Through collaboration, the aim is to enhance governance, athlete performance standards, and long-term sport sustainability across the Island.

A key strategic priority for this fiscal year will be the development of a comprehensive High-Performance Framework, designed to establish clear performance pathways and support systems for Bermuda's elite and emerging athletes. This framework will focus on strengthening athlete preparation, enhancing coaching standards, improving access to sport science and medicine, and ensuring that athletes are equipped to compete successfully at regional and international levels.

Additionally, the department will prioritise the implementation of the Long-Term Athlete Development (LTAD) plans across sporting disciplines. These plans will promote age-appropriate training, athlete wellness, and progressive skill development, ensuring that athletes are supported throughout every stage of their sporting journey from grassroots participation to high-performance competition. Through these initiatives, the Department of Sport and Recreation remains committed to fostering excellence, promoting athlete well-being, and strengthening Bermuda's sporting landscape while ensuring alignment with the vision and objectives of the National Sports Policy.

Mr. Chairman, this summer (2026), the department is launching a series of high-impact upgrades across recreational properties to enhance accessibility and community engagement. Key initiatives include:

- Digital transformation. The rollout will begin with interactive digital signage at government facilities. These upgrades provide personalised user experiences through visual and audio components ensuring information is accessible to individuals with diverse needs. Immersive historical storytelling will be introduced across all camping facilities. The initiative is expected to increase participation, strengthen the value of the facilities and diversify the overall recreational offering.

- **Camp Capacity Expansion.** To meet growing demand, additional campsites at Paget and Darrell's Island will be opened, significantly increasing available spots for the camping season.
- **Youth employment.** To support these enhancements and ensure a seamless visitor experience, summer students will be hired to assist with operations across recreational islands during these peak times. These advancements represent continued commitment to a robust, inclusive, and technologically forward-thinking sports and recreation culture.

Mr. Chairman, while the department continues to strive to meet the needs of parents during the summer months, it must be acknowledged that the demand for camp spaces continues to exceed our current capacity. However, the Department of Sport and Recreation is committed to enhancing access to Summer Day Camp opportunities. That is why, in this third year of running Camp Connect, the department is proud to announce significant upgrades to the Camp Connect online registration system.

Building on the success of previous seasons, the platform will be enhanced to become more robust, more user-friendly and transparent, ensuring a smoother experience for all families.

Mr. Chairman, this year the department will introduce a modernised Summer Camp lottery system as part of its broader digital transformation and service enhancement initiatives. The system is designed to improve transparency, fairness, and operational efficiency in the allocation of Summer Camp spaces, ensuring a more equitable and user-focused experience for Bermuda's families. Key enhancements include:

- upgraded digital infrastructure to support high user demand;
- improved allocation logic to ensure equitable access;
- expanded partnerships with private camp providers through a centralised platform; and
- a continued commitment to affordability.

These improvements respond directly to stakeholder feedback and aim to provide a more transparent, efficient, and equitable registration experience for Bermuda's families. Information via a marketing campaign will be released in the coming months regarding the Summer Camp lottery system.

Mr. Chairman, alongside Camp Connect, the department will provide summer employment for 150 young people, offering aspiring counsellors and specialists valuable hands-on experience in child care and youth development through this meaningful program. The Department of Sport and Recreation remains resolute in advancing the vision set out within the National Sports Policy, strengthening participation, supporting athlete development, improving access to quality recreation facilities, and reinforcing the value of sport within national identity. Guided by the belief that *sport*

matters, sport and recreation will continue to be positioned as essential pillars of health, youth development, community cohesion, and national pride.

Mr. Chairman, I extend my sincere appreciation to the department's staff, the National Sport Governing Bodies, athletes, and community partners whose collective efforts drive this work forward. Together, we will continue building a stronger, healthier, and more resilient Bermuda through sport.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes the presentation on the fiscal year 2026/27 budget allocation for Head 20, the Department of Sport and Recreation. And I will again pause here so that I can solicit questions, comments and concerns from my colleagues.

The Chairman: Thank you. Thank you, Junior Minister Fubler. That was very informative.

Would any Senator wish to speak on Head 20, Sport and Recreation?

I see Senator Smith's hand up, so it is over to you, Senator Smith.

Sen. Tarik Smith: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and again, good morning to the listening audience and my Senate colleagues. I would like to again thank the Junior Minister and the technical team for a very informative brief. I actually have to delete some of my questions because he answered many of them. So, this will not be as long as the first bit of questions.

So just a few, but I will say as a former top Green House athlete, as many of our Senators went to The Berkeley Institute but were on Gold House, so many of us Green House athletes at The Berkeley Institute and one of the better goalkeepers of my generation until my retirement in 2018—

[Laughter]

Sen. Tarik Smith: I have a keen eye on the state of affairs of sport and recreation. Sport allows for people to express themselves in contact or non-contact events that can provide entertainment for those who are spectating, also feelings of triumph and heartache (for us Arsenal fans) and for those that are participating and watching. Recreation is a diversion from work and life stress. We need to have our recreational facilities and sporting . . . sport or community in the best shape for the public to utilise. After this week, I know that many Senators within the Chambers are going to need a lot of rec time for sure.

A few questions on Head 20. You did answer many of these. There is an increase of \$80,000. You answered that mostly for the school . . . the school . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. Tarik Smith: Sports events. Yes, thank you. On page B-239, there's 98 per cent. Just if you can [re-mind] me of how many sporting events it covers

throughout the school year. Like I said, you answered many of my questions that I have here.

Being part of a community club, the North Village Community Club, I know that Government has been giving money to sporting clubs over the years. This has been helpful, especially when it comes to youth development. On item 930065, it is listed that sports investments are being granted \$2.1 million for the coming year. When I look over the performance measures, I see a number of sports investments issued to sporting bodies with initiatives geared towards sports development.

A few questions on this. How is it determined which sports bodies get the allocated funds? What are the procedures in place to follow up with the sports clubs or the governing bodies after the allocated funds have been released to make sure that these funds are being utilised in the appropriate areas? How many times can a sporting club or governing body apply? Can they apply every year? Do they have to apply every other year or every four years? With the number of individual sports awards decreasing by six, is this due to lack of funding for these awards? I ask this because the budget did grow a bit in this area.

You definitely answered my question on Paget Island and so forth, which I appreciate because that's an island . . . Paget Island, especially where many of us young Bermuda teenagers did Outward Bound. I did in my younger days in the 1990s, many, many moons ago. So, thank you for giving that information on White's [Island], Paget [Island], and Ports Island.

Moving on, you gave a lot of information on the recreation programmes. Just a few questions. It was \$1.5 million allocated on line 30180. Are these primarily used for the out-of-school camps, these fundings? Do these fundings also cover the before or after school programmes? What's the percentage of funds out of these funds that are used for before or after school programmes, if these funds are used for these programmes?

Moving on . . . just a question about the Motorsports Park. My son (here we go again tooting a horn), [was a] former go-kart racer, two-time Tag Junior champion, and Court Street racing champion for the Bermuda Karting Association [BKA] until he left to pursue education and football dreams in the United Kingdom. So, when I saw this item line I had to ask this question. The performance measure is 30090. It says clients have ranked the facility . . . I was there day-in and day-out for four years. I would ask, is this survey online? And can you direct myself and the public as to where we can have our say on the Motorsports Park?

I see an increase in Professional Services from 2024/25, from \$517,000 to \$732,000 in a year, and it's been marginally decreased this year by \$19,000. Of course, any decrease is good. Can the Junior Minister please provide the public with a reason [for] the massive increase of consultancy fees over the last two budgets? How many consultants do these allocated

funds equate to, and how many consultants are Bermudian versus non-Bermudian?

Thank you for your time, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Junior Minister, for the answers in advance.

Thank you so much.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Smith.

Would any other Senator wish to speak on this end?

Yes, I see Senator Tannock's hand up. Senator, over to you.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Yes, thank you, [Mr. Chairman], and one thing I can say, I know more about women's sport and prowess than I do about my own daughters. I've never met a prouder father. It's wonderful to see you.

Thank you so much for your detailed presentation, Junior Minister, Senator Fubler. You know, sometimes they say the jokes write themselves. So when you, Senator Fubler, mentioned about the funds to the golf courses to increase accessibility and to afford, well, yes, for funding and to increase accessibility, all I heard in the back of my mind was the chairman of Port Royal Golf Course saying, *Look at how much people pay at Mid-Ocean [Club] and Tucker's [Point Golf Club]*. And if you had to go to pay at one of those courses, you would pay a lot more. And the Government . . . taxpayers are subsidising public golf.

And how does that match with this idea that the Government is giving funding to golf courses to improve accessibility when the seniors' membership at Port Royal Golf Course has been taken away? Well, will be [taken away] as of 1 April, the family membership has been taken away, or will be as of 1 April. And we are comparing a public golf course that is supposed to be accessible for which the Government is providing funding in this budget. And we are being told that fees are being raised to \$8,000 when the largest group of our membership of that golf course is seniors.

So, my question to the Junior Minister and to the Senator is, Is the Government behind these changes being instituted at Port Royal? Or is the money that the Government is allocating to Port Royal going to be used to offset the fees that are going to be increased? That's my first question.

My second is, when was the last time that audited financials of Port Royal Golf Course were put before the Government to determine that this funding was required? I noted that the chairperson of Port Royal Golf Course indicated that they were trying to get their accounts up to date, but that the financials were with the Accountant General . . . I am not even sure. So, my question is, How was it determined? What set of audited financials determined the need for the increase in fees at Port Royal Golf Course and also for the amount that the Government has decided that they will give Port Royal Golf Course? And as I said, will any of that amount be used to offset the fee increase?

Additionally, was the Government consulted when they proposed to give this grant to Port Royal Golf Course? And are they in agreement with the fee increase? That's the first thing with regard to Port Royal Golf Course.

The second one is in regard to pickleball. So, I am sure that . . . well, maybe I only know because it's next to my job. But there is now a new pickleball court or will be a new pickleball court in Hamilton. And I note that the Government gives funds to the Bermuda Pickleball Association in the amount of \$25,000 and that we also run our own pickleball court at the Tennis Stadium. That is . . . and again, this goes to Senator Cunningham's point, it says that 50 per cent . . . it says that the pickleball court is utilised by 50 per cent. Okay.

So, if we look at the stats that are given in the performance measures, the performance measures state that 900 people utilise the Tennis Stadium court in its entirety. So, if we look at 50 per cent of that, is the Government saying from those performance measures that 450 people use the pickleball court a month?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Point of clarification.

The Chairman: Senator, do you want to take the point of clarification?

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Yes, sure.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Yes. And so, the performance metric is measuring how much of the available time to book the court is being utilised.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Oh, okay. Thank you.

So my question is, Since we are giving money to the Pickleball Association and we are also looking to continue to maintain our pickleball courts, has the Government considered the impact that the new pickleball courts, the new private pickleball courts that are just up the street . . . will the indoor courts, which can . . . you know, they are indoors, so they are far more accessible during the weather. Has the Government evaluated the impact of that and has that determined what the Government does in the budget with the pickleball courts?

My next question is with the BFA, but I am not a footballer, so I might have gotten my wires crossed. So, the BFA gets the largest amount of sports grants, right? They get \$300,000. And we know that some sporting clubs can also get funds. However, we know that there is a . . . there has been a prevalence of violence in Bermuda football games. When the Government gives grants to the Football Association and to clubs, do they have any accountability for ensuring the standard of behaviour? So, what does Government require? And also, does Government require that the sporting organisations that they give to have updated financials? And prior to giving any type of funds, does

the Government require to look at updated financials? I wouldn't even ask for audited financials. I think that might be a bridge too far. So just do they have . . . before the Government distributes any funds to sporting bodies, do they request updated financials and are those reviewed to determine how much funds they're getting?

And then the second is, when we are seeing that there is a code of conduct or misbehaviour that rises to the level of violence at sporting events, does the Government factor that in, in terms of requiring that there is some type of extra security, requiring that there is some type of . . . I guess, behavioural enforcement system? So, what . . . are we still giving money to organisations where we see that the behaviour isn't up to the standard of what we want for one of our sporting bodies?

And those are my questions. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thanks, Senator Tannock.

Would any other Senator . . . Senator Cunningham.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm a big cheerleader and spectator, rather than sportsperson, so I am just going to start with that.

But one of my favourite events of the year, which I haven't seen actually on either, is the International Race Weekend. I am a big volunteer and so love that event. But I do have a few questions.

My first question is on school sports events, which I love. I can kind of understand why it's not within education, but I wonder, is this public and private? Is this the inter-school [sports] events? Like, what exactly does this \$85,000 cover? And maybe it is sports programmes within Whitney Institute, The Berkeley Institute, whatever, fine. But I just wanted to know, you know, what . . . it talks about programme delivery, is that the inter-[school] sports?

And then on the athletic awards, I think . . . I don't . . . I don't think our junior athletes and senior athletes, elite athletes actually get enough. And I know that there is a lot, and . . . and I commend a lot of the private companies for sponsoring a lot of these athletes. So, I can agree with that. I just wondered about the reallocation to sports. So, I am seeing from the athletic awards, \$410[,000] down to \$360[,000] on [page] B-239.

And I think that was the clarification that that \$50,000 went into the school sports events. Then . . . oh, then about the . . . onto the performance measures. So, Senator Smith asked specifically about the Motorsports Park satisfaction rating. But mine would be for the softball, tennis, and motorsport. How is that feedback requested and received for satisfaction ratings?

And then on to the recreational programmes with the camps. So first off, you mentioned the potential for 150 jobs this summer for summer students. I think for the listening public and in general, what age groups would be eligible for those summer jobs? As in, would

they drop to 14 or 16 years old? I am just interested to know what the lower age bracket would be.

And with the camping overall, is there an idea of what percentage of campers are Bermudian versus overseas? So, are our camping facilities actually tourism facilities? Because I know that we had, and I know the camping is just on the islands and . . . but I know we had the . . . I haven't seen them in a while, those Airstream things that were put in some of our parks—which may well come under parks, but to me, it's also camping. But I just wondered if that's a tourism draw.

And then on the revenue, page B-241, we talk about facility fees of \$15,000, up \$4,000. And I was just wondering if the Junior Minister could explain how—and I assume this is fees that people pay to use facilities. So, Bermuda teams will pay, and I have heard that overseas teams that come in do not . . . are not required to pay facilities fees. So, I just wanted to confirm, is this facilities fees just Bermudian teams? And then if overseas teams come and play or use our facilities that they don't pay.

And then it's purely an ignorant question on [page] C-7, the National Sports Centre Capital Grant. What is that for? And why the enormous increase from \$800,000 to \$2.5 million? And that could well be obvious.

And finally, on page C-23, my Senate colleague talked about the Bermuda Football Association getting \$300,000. But I just wondered, what is the determination for, for example, our Swimming Association to only get \$64,000, whereas our Bicycle Association gets \$76,000. And our golfers that, you know . . . what is the determination by sport? Because obviously, we have some national sports, but we also have some sports where we excel over and above our general little school stage. So, I just wondered if there was any insight, or is this just what these governing bodies have requested? And I also see CedarBridge, but I do not see The Berkeley Institute. But anyway, I'll leave that there.

And that . . . oh, I also, because I know it is your passion, I commend you for the digital transformation, especially with . . . I am looking forward to the—

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Well, I don't have children, so my children will not be going into a lottery—

[Laughter]

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: —but the digital transformation of the sporting facilities. But I do wish all parents good luck in the lottery when it comes. I am sure we will hear soon.

The Chairman: Senator Cunningham, thank you.

Does any other Senator care to ask a question on Head 20, Recreation?

No? Hearing none, I guess, Junior Minister Fubler, we will wait until the end of your next [head], Marine and Ports to receive the answers to these questions. Is that your preference?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: And so, I do have some of the responses for Head 71, several of them, in fact. And so, if you are so inclined, I could move through some of those before proceeding on, but . . .

The Chairman: Very good, Junior Minister, yes.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Okay, sure.

And so, the first question I received was that, even with the discontinuation of the Headquarters performance measures, is there still a compliance review and training being delivered by Headquarters? And I think that was actually the question I posed. I don't know if it came from my colleagues, but I was concerned about that. And just to confirm, yes, the training also will occur in Q2 2026 to ensure that compliance officers are up to date with international standards, which does feed into the question from Senator Smith. And there will continue to be oversight provided by Ministry HQ to ensure all technical officers are performing their functions within the remit of legislation and Government's Financial Instructions.

Currently, Ministry HQ meets regularly with all other heads of department within the Ministry to discuss matters that deal with strategy, operational, and general risk management, which I do think feeds into my colleague's rather pointed question around coordination across the departments, indicating that because there's not specific line items that go across departments, there's no coordination. But I think we can see that's the case. I just want to call out an example closer to home.

In my day-to-day job, I lead a team of what is known as the application services department within the overall IT function. And there is a separate department for infrastructure services. And again, my team is responsible for all of the applications that run on that infrastructure. We have no line item that shows that we work together. We do have separate line items to capture our functions, but I assure you that that work does not proceed without collaboration. And I think we can apply that same logic to the various departments of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport. And I tried to kind of emphasise some of those words that were highlighted as not occurring to the benefit of my colleague across the aisle.

And next, as far as . . . Here, from Senator Smith, for the development objective three on page [B]-234, can you expand on the actual plan for this objective? Are there measurable goals for this committee? How are we measuring success? And so, the current Air Service Development Committee comprises Skyport Bermuda, the Bermuda Airport Authority, the Bermuda Hotel Association, and Bermuda Tourism

Authority. Again, across departments, as it were, both Transport and Tourism.

And the overarching strategy there is . . . the goal of the Air Service Development committee is to maintain existing airlift, specifically on key gateways of the Northeastern United States, UK and Canada, and to support the reopening of the Fairmont Southampton, which will see a 25 per cent increase in room capacity, and to build the case for increased airlift. As I am sure you have seen in the public domain, you do need to have a bit of networking, glad-handing with the executives of these organisations.

I would like to take a moment to highlight that we had the Caribbean Tourism Organization's Air Connectivity Summit here, which had executives from some of these airlines who we are advocating for increased connectivity, not only to Bermuda, but amongst our Caribbean brother and sister nations. And then this Air Service Development committee also identifies growth opportunities with secondary gateways.

And moving on, the next question related to the same committee. Is there a budget for the committee? What is the budget set for compensation? And if the total budget is not just compensation, what else does it cover? And there is no Ministerial budget set for the committee, and no compensation for committee members. Budgets for each participating member organisation are managed by that organisation, i.e. the government ones—BTA, Bermuda Airport Authority, Skyport Bermuda, and Bermuda Hotel Association. All of those have a vested interest in success in this space, and so I assume no additional funding from the Ministry specifically was required.

And moving on to another question, [page] B-237, under performance measures for item 81065. Why are not all hotels being inspected yearly by the deadline? And how large are the inspection teams? And I touched on a couple of those already, but just to reiterate, now that I have a more fulsome response from the technical officers. The inspection team includes two compliance officers/hotel inspectors, and although listed under Tourism Accommodation Inventory, some hotels might not be ready for inspections by the 31 March deadline. The compliance officers work closely with the general managers of the hotels regarding what is required to ensure that the property meets the regulations. Another reason for setting the 90 per cent target performance measure is that some of the properties are at full capacity and are unable to accommodate the inspection schedule of the compliance officers, I guess to not impact visitors as they go about the rooms and the facilities and the like.

And hotel licences are issued after the properties meet the Department of Fire and Rescue Services regulations, as well as the Department of Health regulations. And I note that the hotels are inspected twice yearly, one summer inspection and one winter inspection.

And the next was a question around, what is the national standard for the inspections? And the standards are contained in the Hotels (Licensing and Control) Regulations 1976. These regulations are posited best practices of world-renowned destinations in the United Kingdom.

Excuse me, Mr. Chairman, if I may request a time check so I can take a slight pause for some water.

The Chairman: Yes, Junior Minister, you have done a lot of talking this morning. So yes, it's twelve o'clock. Just as a time check, we started at 10:08 am, so I am going to suggest we go until 12:38 pm, which would be two and a half hours into our three-hour duration for these three Ministries. We have roughly 38 minutes left.

So, if that is . . .

Sen. Mischa Fubler: And so, then if I may, Mr. Chairman, maybe I can proceed with the final head and take questions, and then that will provide the technical officers even more time to provide fulsome responses.

The Chairman: That sounds like a great plan, Junior Minister Fubler. Please proceed.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Excellent, thank you. And so, moving on to . . . I need to pull my brief up here. I am now moving on to Head 30, the Department of Marine and Port Services.

HEAD 30—DEPARTMENT OF MARINE AND PORTS SERVICES

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, it gives me yet again great pleasure to present the budget for Head 30, Department of Marine and Ports [Services] found on pages B-244 through B-248 of the Budget Book.

Mission

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the mission statement for the department is as follows: *The regulation and safe operations of Bermuda's maritime affairs including marine border security, search and rescue and public transportation.*

Expenditure Overview

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the expenditure overview as found on page B-244, the 2026/27 budget allocation for Marine and Ports is \$24,494,000. This represents an increase of \$707,000, or 3 per cent, from the prior fiscal year. This budget allocation is broken down by programmes and business units, and I will now iterate through them.

West End (Dockyard), 3006

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the combined budget allocation for all business units under this

programme, specifically business units 40040, Navigational Aids; 40140, Tug Service; 40210, Tender Service; and 40260, Dockyard Maintenance is \$7,185,000. This represents an increase of \$214,000, or 3 per cent, over the prior year's budget to cover approved negotiated salary and wage uplifts.

Central (Hamilton Office), 3007

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the combined budget allocation for all business units under this programme, specifically business unit 40090, Ferry Service; business unit 40150, Mooring and Boat Registration; and business unit 40220, Administration, is \$12,220,000. This represents an increase of \$312,000, or 3 per cent, over the prior year's budget to cover approved negotiated salary and wage uplifts.

East End (Fort George), 3008

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the combined budget allocation for all business units under this programme, specifically business unit 40100, Maritime Safety and Security and business unit 40180, Piloted Service and Offshore Search and Rescue, is \$5,089,000. This represents an increase of \$181,000, or 4 per cent, over the prior year's budget to cover approved negotiated salary and wage uplifts.

Revenue Summary

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman moving on to Revenue Summary, as found on page B-245, the department is expected to generate revenue of approximately \$6,449,000. This represents an increase in revenue of \$135,000, or 2 per cent, from the prior year. This increase is primarily due to additional revenue from pilotage fees, boats haulage, and local cruises.

Revenue is generated via the following sources: ferry services, tug services, boat haulage, pilotage fee, boat moorings, and port dues.

Capital Development Expenditure

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the 2026/27 Capital Development Budget is found on page C-7 of the Budget Book, and is \$1,500,000. This amount consists of \$1,000,000 appropriated for the ongoing Marine and Ports Dockyard workshop renovations, and \$500,000 for the floating docks refit project.

Capital Acquisition Expenditure

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the 2026/27 Capital Acquisition Budget is found on page C-14 of the Budget Book, and totals \$2,283,000. This amount comprises of \$585,000 for navigational aids for the department's ageing ship navigation infrastructure; \$580,000 for the replacement of engines for the ferry service;

\$432,000 for the replacement of the vessel tracking system at Bermuda Maritime Operations Centre to improve maritime safety and security; \$675,000 for the mandatory five-year Lloyd's docking of the department's frontline tug; and \$11,000 for computer equipment.

Personnel

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the 2026/27 budget estimates for personnel can be found on page B-247. Total full-time equivalents requested is 162, and this remains consistent with the prior fiscal year's 2025/26 original budget request.

Performance Measures

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to report that the department's performance measures as found on pages B-247 and B-248 for fiscal year 2025/26 were for the most part achieved. This is explained as follows.

Business Unit 40040, Navigational Aids

Sen. Mischa Fubler: To ensure all inshore and offshore lights and beacons are operating 99.5 per cent of the time, and this was achieved and resulted in an inventory replacement of lights. The target outcome for 2026/27 remains at 99.5 per cent.

Business Unit 40090, Ferry Service

Sen. Mischa Fubler: To provide on-time ferry service to the public, ensuring sufficient vessels are available to meet the published schedule 99 per cent of times, as per the published schedule, was not fully achieved in 2025/26 due to an ageing fleet on certain routes, which I am sure I will hear more (about) in the question period.

[Laughter]

Sen. Mischa Fubler: The target outcomes for 2026/27 are slightly lower and more realistic toward achieving this measure as every effort is made to work through solutions regarding the ageing fleet on certain routes.

Business Unit 40100, Maritime Safety and Security

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, responding to distress calls and deploy vessels to offshore search and rescue cases in a timely manner 100 per cent of the time and decreased registration documentation time frame for new distress beacons from 14 days to 7 days—and this was achieved. With improved radar capabilities and the use of long-range CCTV cameras and upgraded vessel tracking system, this level of service is expected to be maintained. Target outcomes for 2026/27 are consistent with 2025/26.

Business Unit 40140, Tugs

Sen. Mischa Fubler: The measurement here to provide tug service to international shipping without delay 100 per cent of the time was achieved and the department was successful in providing advance notice for scheduling of shipping arrivals and departures to avoid any conflicts. Target outcomes for 2026/27 fiscal year are consistent with the previous year.

Business Unit 40150, Moorings and Boat Regulations

Sen. Mischa Fubler: The performance targets are to process all moorings applications within six weeks 100 per cent of the time and relicensing of all moorings as per the published deadline 31 May each year 90 per cent of the time. These measures were achieved and a new improved database system facilitated an increased number of online payments. Target outcomes for 2026/27 are consistent with 2025/26.

Business Unit 40180, Piloted Service and Offshore Search and Rescue

Sen. Mischa Fubler: The target is to ensure the availability of branch pilots and pilot boats to arriving and departing international ships 100 per cent of the time. These measures were achieved with two well-maintained pilot boats and a full complement of licensed qualified pilots. This level of service is expected to be maintained and therefore target outcomes for 2026/27 remain consistent with the previous year.

Business Unit 40220, Administration

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Ensuring all staff are [Standard of Training Certification and Watchkeeping] STCW certified 86 per cent of the time and meet the performance appraisals completion deadline 100 per cent of the time. These measures were achieved and the department was successful in utilising the on Island Maritime Academy now in full operation to shorten the time frame for training for all mariners. This level of certification is expected to be maintained and therefore target outcomes for 2026/27 remain consistent with the prior fiscal year.

Business Unit 40260, Dockyard Maintenance

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Full compliance with Lloyd's Register survey requirements by docking of the fleet annually 100 per cent of the time and ensure sufficient vessels are repaired and remain in service to meet the published schedule 100 per cent of the time. These measures were achieved and target outcomes for 2026/27 match 2025/26 . . . or remain consistent with.

Major Policy Changes

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, the department will continue consulting with stakeholders to ensure the continued implementation of the Marine and Port Services Act 2021 and remains a smooth transition to the new legislation.

Plans for the Upcoming Year

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Mr. Chairman, plans for the upcoming year will include:

- Training of departmental staff to internationally recognised standards will continue to be a key priority to ensure that the department consistently meets its obligations under global maritime conventions. This includes maintaining the required levels of competency, certification, and readiness in line with established safe manning requirements.
- Ongoing training and professional development will support staff in keeping up to date with evolving industry practices, safety protocols, and regulatory changes. This not only strengthens operational capability across all areas of the department but also ensures that Bermuda remains compliant with international expectations for maritime safety, security, and service delivery.
- Continued progress with the department's succession planning to ensure that highly technical and specialised roles are increasingly filled by qualified Bermudians. A key part of this effort is the relaunch of the department's training programme, which is designed to build local capacity and provide clear pathways for Bermudians to develop the skills and experience required for these critical positions. At present, the department has two trainees actively progressing through this programme.
 - One is undertaking training to become a Bermuda branch pilot within the pilot service, a role that requires a high level of expertise in navigation and of local waters.
 - The second is training as a vessel traffic controller within the Bermuda Maritime Operations Centre, supporting the safe and efficient monitoring and coordination of maritime traffic. These initiatives reflect the department's ongoing commitment to investing in Bermudian talent, strengthening institutional knowledge, and ensuring long-term sustainability in the delivery of essential maritime services.
- Continued training for the department's tug crews. This remains a key priority, particularly given the operation of the department's modern state-of-the-art tug fleet. Ongoing training ensures that crew members maintain the high level of technical skill, safety awareness, and operational competence required to manage complex manoeuvres, support large vessels, and respond effectively to varying marine conditions. At the same time, focused succession planning is underway to prepare for the eventual retirement of experienced personnel within this

section. This includes identifying and developing suitable candidates, providing structured training opportunities, and ensuring the transfer of critical knowledge and expertise. These efforts will help to maintain continuity of operations, uphold safety standards, and ensure that the department is well positioned to meet future demands.

- The introduction of the two new 550-passenger fast ferries to the fleet. These new ferries were completed, arrived on schedule, and importantly within the approved budget. These vessels represent a significant investment in strengthening the Island's public marine transport system. They are expected to enter full service with the commencement of the cruise ship season on 6 April 2026. Once operational, the ferries will provide a much-needed increase in capacity and reliability for the movement of passengers between Dockyard, Hamilton, and St. George's. This will be particularly important during peak cruise ship periods, helping to ease congestion, improve the visitor experience, and provide residents with more efficient and dependable transport options. The introduction of these vessels will also enhance overall service delivery and support the continued growth of Bermuda's tourism and transport sectors.
- Continued progress of the renovation of the Marine and Ports workshops in partnership with the Department of Works and Engineering. This project is focused on upgrading and modernising the existing facilities to better support the maintenance and servicing of the department's fleet and equipment. The improvements will enhance operational efficiency, provide a safer and more functional working environment for staff, and ensure that the workshops are equipped to meet current and future technical demands. Close collaboration with the Department of Works and Engineering will help to ensure that the project is delivered effectively in line with required standards and with minimal disruption to ongoing operations.
- Continued advancement of the department's public-private partnership programme aimed at the removal of derelict boats from Bermuda's waters. This initiative brings together government and private sector stakeholders to address the growing number of abandoned and unsafe vessels that pose environmental, navigational, and aesthetic concerns. Through this collaborative approach, the department is working to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of removal efforts while ensuring that appropriate disposal and environmental standards are maintained. The programme also supports the protection of Bermuda's marine environment, enhances safety for waterway users, and contributes to the overall upkeep and appearance of the Island's coastal areas.

Mr. Chairman, as has been highlighted in previous years, the Department of Marine and Port Services remain one of the most critical operational arms

of the Government of Bermuda. The department plays a central role in facilitating the safe and efficient movement of essential goods and commercial shipping into and out of Bermuda's ports, which is vital to the Island's economy and daily life. The department delivers a wide range of services that support both residents and the wider maritime industry. These include the operation of the public ferry service, piloted services to guide vessels safely into port, tugboat operations, ship tender services, as well as the registration and management of boats and moorings. The department also oversees the Bermuda Maritime Operations Centre, which serves as a key hub for monitoring maritime activity and coordinating responses.

Mr. Chairman, in addition to these responsibilities, the department plays a leading role in regional and international maritime safety. It is responsible for coordinating search and rescue operations across the region of the North Atlantic, ensuring that Bermuda meets its obligations under international conventions. The department also maintains oversight of seaport security and marine border control, ensuring compliance with global standards and safeguarding Bermuda's maritime borders. Through these functions, the Department of Marine and Port Services continues to ensure that Bermuda's maritime operations remain safe, efficient, and aligned with international best practices, while supporting the Island's economic stability and security.

Mr. Chairman, I again end by thanking the leadership and staff of Head 30, the Department of Marine and Port Services, for their efforts to continuously deliver a high level of customer service.

Mr. Chairman, this ends my presentation today for Heads 71, 20, and 30, under the remit of the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Junior Minister Fubler.

Would any Senator care to ask a question on this Head 30 for Marine and Ports?

Yes, Senator Smith.

Sen. Tarik Smith: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. And again, thank you to Junior Minister Fubler and the technical team for a very informative and eloquent delivery of the budget papers.

Marine and Ports, being a mariner myself growing up around boats, I had some of the greatest experiences of my life as a young boy. A family member of mine was a member of the Marine and Ports staff in the early 1980s, and I used to be able to go on the tug when the tugs used to push the cruise ships in. So, some very, very fond memories. And I can appreciate the hard work that the men and women of the Marine and Ports division do throughout the Island as far as marine safety and marking in the channels.

I have got a few questions, not as many. Senator Fubler has done a very good job today . . . this morning.

On page B-244, Development Objectives, it says continuation of transport infrastructure capital plan. How long is this plan expected to take? Is there a team of individuals working on this plan? Is there a fixed budget for this capital plan?

In the general summary, line 40260, Dockyard Maintenance, there is an increase of \$93,000 with an estimate of \$3.7 million. According to the performance measures for this item on page B-247, it states this \$3.7 million is for dry docking, machinery, slipping, and boat cleaning. Now, being a boat person, I know "boat" is just an acronym for *Bring Out Another Thousand*. My question is (I'm sure the listening audience might be wondering), Is there any other maintenance done to support this allocation for the \$3.7 million other than what I just listed?

Going to page B-244, in the General Summary, it says there's an increase of \$38,000 for navigational aids. As I said, I, like many Bermudians, enjoy my time on the water. And I have come in on many a night from fishing on my boat. I would say that some of the channel markers could use lights versus the red and green or green reflective markings.

My question is, according to the performance measures on 40040, Marine and Ports are at 99.5 per cent compliant with international standards set by The International Association of Marine Aids [to Navigation] and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) [The International Organization for Marine Aids to Navigation]. What was the \$891,000 allocated for if we are compliant with these? Will we be installing lights to more channel markers? Will there be new channel marker posts put in? That's just a question on that.

Staying on [page] B-244, Maritime Safety and Security is paramount, as oftentimes things can happen on the water. Line item 40010 indicates an increase of \$95,000, taking the total to \$2.7 million. Is this for harbour radio only? Is there a full-time crew on standby for emergencies 24/7? If not a full-time crew, what are their operational hours? How many search and rescue boats do we have in operation?

I see on page C-14, line item 7660, we have what appears to be a new tug, or search and rescue vessel coming in for \$675,000. Will this vessel be positioned in the East End or will it be positioned elsewhere? It also states that this is a new or replacement vessel. Was the older vessel in operation or was it inoperable or on dry dock? And if it was out of operation, how long has it been out of service?

In performance measures 40100, it says we have a 99 per cent success rate when we are called for a search and rescue. How many search and rescue operations took place for this outcome, if a number could be given? Like in a previous head, it was asked, success rate is what it is, but what were the numbers that

were actually . . . the number of operations that took place?

Again, on [page] C-14, line 76129, it states the Government is getting a marine engine for \$580,000. Which vessel will this engine be fitted in? Has the engine already been ordered? What is the timeline of when the engine will be on Island and fitted into the vessel? Is the vessel that the engine is going into operational, or has it been removed from service? And how long has it been, if it's inoperable, long has it been out of service?

[Page] C-14, line 76294, we see an increase of \$298,000 for Vessel Traffic Management System, the VTMS. This is listed as a replacement item, but a VTMS was already replaced for \$134,000 just this last budget. So, my question is, how is the VTMS that we purchased? Has it already expired? Is it out of date already? Just some clarification on why we had no purchases over the two years preceding and now we are getting \$134,000 and it says replacement item and not new. How old is the system that we are replacing? It appears the system being replaced, like I said, of similar or standard quality considered there is \$432,000 estimated. Has any consideration been given to purchase of a new system or an updated system to the ageing system?

Thank you, Junior Minister, for your answers in advance and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Smith.

Would any other Senator . . . Senator Tannock, over to you. Thank you.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Thank you, [Mr. Chairman].

So funny enough, Senator Smith and I had very similar questions, so I will pick up where he left off.

I, too, noted that the performance measures for enforcement and compliance in Marine and Ports look phenomenal. Right? We see . . . sorry, I have so much highlighted. Okay.

We see for basically responding to distress signals, responding to . . . looking at incidents, controllers taking action. We are at 99 per cent, 100 per cent, 99 per cent. I mean, from unfunctional buoys, all of this, right, looks great. There is no measure, aside from vessel availability as required monthly, under 85 per cent. So that's great.

My question becomes similar to Senator Smith's. So then, when we look on [page] C-14 and we look under Marine and Ports, we see that there's a \$335,000 revised estimate. So \$335,000 more than initially thought for navigation aids. My question is, if everything is running optimally, like I said, the lowest is 85 percent, what caused the increase? What caused that \$335,000 increase?

And then my question was actually about the marine engine as well. And so, I guess, you know what, just for clarity, when I see "R" that means a revised figure, but does it mean a replacement figure?

[No audible response.]

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Replacement. Okay.

So, again, it's the same question about the \$580,000 that was not indicated that it was required prior.

And then I had a question also about the VTMS. So, thank you, Senator Smith.

And then I had a question about the tug vessel. And so, like I said, the lowest performance measure for Marine and Ports was the fact that there were not enough vessels. So, I would assume that the \$675,000 is for one new tug vessel.

So those are my questions. Like I said, Senator Smith took most of my questions. So those are my only follow-up ones. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Tannock.

Would any other Senator . . . yes, I see Senator Cunningham. Over to you. Thank you.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And don't worry, Senator Fubler, the Pink Ferry is coming.

[Laughter]

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: But I will start else . . . I will start actually with just, I think, a question that I would like clarity on. And you have a way with words in explaining things. So hopefully I can explain what I am looking for.

So, on page B-246, where we see the full-time equivalents, we see an original budgeted, I would assume last year, 2025/26, of 162 full-time. We then see the revised number of 142 full-time equivalents. And then the estimate for 2026/27 is back up at 162. The way I read that is that the budget last year of \$23.78 million, which is the same original and revised, was for a total headcount of 162 full-time equivalents. When I see the revised, it then looks that . . . for example, in [business unit] 40040, there were supposed to be budgeted nine full-time equivalents, and there were only seven. Now we're back to nine.

My question is, am I reading that correctly, so that there weren't actually . . . there were only seven full-time, I don't know, employees, should I say, in that department versus the nine that were originally budgeted? I just want . . . I always see that. And when I look at an original and revised budget number being the same, I just wonder when the employee count is 20 down, how it is the same. Anyway, that was just an observation that I would like clarified.

Okay, moving on, we are excitedly seeing the return of SailGP this summer. I know it was mentioned earlier that it has BTA funding, but I was just wondering with Marine and Ports, if there are any anticipated extra expenses given the . . . I would assume, very likely increased activity in our marine area, and where that

might fall, or maybe there's a few extra compliance things that need to be done.

I am also interested to know what these local cruise revenues are, going from [\$5,000] . . . I mean, we're talking small amounts, but \$5,000 2024/25 to \$11,000 last year to \$25,000 this year. Is that suggesting that we are seeing a massive influx in local cruises? Is that local tour boat operators?

And the same with, I think this is the first Ministry, well, the first department we have looked at the travel hasn't increased. So, I'll commend the . . . I suppose they get to go on boats all the time, so . . . But, you know, is there no . . . with the training for especially things like the new ferries, there is no associated increased travel expected for any of the training. Although I do see the training budget has decreased slightly.

Then onto the Pink Ferry. So, for my listeners in constituency 28, and the rest of the Warwick and Paget coastlines, the department objective on page B-244 states number three: *improve customer satisfaction*. And I do note that while we ask for customer satisfaction metrics on the use of a pickleball court, we don't appear to ask for it on a major service for transportation and ferries.

But my question is, under page B-247, business unit, Ferry Service 40090, 85 per cent scheduled on time, 95 per cent published scheduled. This year, we have already seen three stoppages, and I think yesterday's headline was for, you know, the near future. So, I just . . . is this, I mean, this must be every single ferry service, but does it also include some of the cruise ship ferry schedules that maybe local residents are not included on?

I also note on page C-14, with the capital acquisition of 76540 Ferries/Pilot Boats, back in 2024/25, it was \$10 million. So, I assume we bought some then. Last year, it was \$8.7 [million], which you rightly said came in under budget. Actually, I watched it, well done—

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Five hundred thousand dollars (almost) under budget at \$8.3 [million], zero for this year. I think the residents that rely on the Paget (or Pink Ferry route) would want to know if 76129, the Marine Engine at \$580[,000] [*sic*], is for new engines for the current ferry. I do believe there are three of the little Pink ferries. One is completely out of commission, one is used for parts, and then the other one is the one that is used in service. So, I am just wondering, is that \$508[,000] [*sic*] . . . I mean, where can I see on the budget that the Government has an agenda to continue the Pink Ferry route? And then you . . . I can talk to 12:38 pm if you want.

With the relicensing of moorings and removal of unregistered, illegal and unregistered moorings. Again, when we talk about numbers, percentages,

relicensing of all moorings within the 31 May deadline, how do you know how many there are if they then become illegal? If I don't pay . . . that's a really confused question. In fact, ignore that question because I've just confused myself asking it.

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Well, I just think . . . so we have a mooring. If I don't pay it, then I guess it would be in the 10 per cent that's unlicensed and then it would be in the illegal moorings that then need to be removed the following year. But we have 500 illegal and unregistered moorings, which surprises me. It says removal (on [page B-]248) moorings and boat regulations, removal of, and then in brackets (500) *illegal, unregistered moorings by year end*. Would it not make sense to try and sell those off and get them put back into operation?

And then my . . . I feel like I had a final question. Oh, my final question was around the derelict boats. And obviously they do pose navigational issues and probably some environmental issues. And I was just wondering, again, as a, you know, we have got the moorings and boat regulations. Is there a target number of boats that will be removed? Obviously, it is generally dependent on hurricane and wind, but I do note that there are a number of boats still up on coastlines. Is there a target number of boats to be removed this year?

And I also thank the private and charitable organisations that help with that removal.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

Would any other Senator care to ask a question? Senator Rogers.

Sen. David Rogers: I suffer the curse of going last, and my compliments to the other Senators for just hammering all the questions that I had written down. Well done, gentlemen and ladies.

I have a quick question related to the . . . on page B-245, under Energy. I am assuming that's fuel costs. With the changes in . . . and if it is with the changes in the global climate, has any hedging for increases in fuel costs been accounted for with the budgeted item?

And I am not certain if this was already gone over, but just for clarity for myself, there is a pilot detention fee. What exactly does that entail?

[Pause]

The Chairman: Senator Rogers, is that your final question?

Sen. David Rogers: Yes, thank you.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much. So, it is now 12:38 pm. So, let's just provide a recap of where we are.

We started at 10:08 am this morning, and we are now two and a half hours into a maximum of three hours for Tourism, Marine and Ports, and Sport and Recreation. And Junior Minister Fubler has done a very good job of taking us through all three of those.

So, when we return at two o'clock, Junior Minister Fubler can respond to the outstanding questions. He can then move the heads for those three Ministries. Then following that, we move into the next Ministry, which is Education. And we have four hours allocated to that.

So, with that, I propose that we break for lunch and return at two o'clock.

Thank you very much for a very productive morning, especially Junior Minister Fubler and the technical staff who gave him great support. So, that was well done to all.

Thank you.

Proceedings in Committee suspended at 12:38 pm

Proceedings in Committee resumed at 2:02 pm

[Sen. John Wight, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2026/27

[Continuation thereof]

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Senators and listening audience.

We are returning to the Committee of the Whole [Senate] for the continuation of the ministries: Tourism; Marine and Ports; and Sports and Education *[sic]*—

An Hon. Senator: Sports and Recreation.

The Chairman: Sports and Recreation. Sorry.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Yes, I don't want to combine those: Sports and Education. [It is] Sports and Recreation. I will get that one right.

So, I think there were some outstanding questions, Junior Minister Fubler, to answer from this morning's session. And then following that, we would ask that you can move the heads. So why don't we start with answering the outstanding questions.

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND TRANSPORT, CULTURE AND SPORT

[Continuation thereof]

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And so, continuing on with our questions from earlier today, [page] B-235 in 2024, there is no budget for Training, but there was a notable change in 2025. And so, the question follows on to ask how many people are being trained? Does the certification need to be renewed annually? And is everyone taking the same certification? And the response I have back for that is that the Training budget was not used in 2024/25, however it was budgeted in 2025/26. The two compliance officers will be undertaking training in the second quarter of this year, 2026. And this upgrade is not required annually and that the two compliance officers will undertake the training simultaneously.

Following on from that, in relation to travel, the question was, Is there an increase due to the consolidation of the heads in reference to comparing 2024 to 2025? And I guess at this point I will take the opportunity to remind my colleagues that in my brief I did mention how there was the consolidation, although I reckon this would mostly apply to the Ministry Headquarters as opposed to, say, the Department of Sport and Recreation. But continuing on, there is no increase in travel from the prior 2025. However, from 2024 the mark increase is due to changes to the Ministry portfolio in 2025. And travel is in relation to the Minister and relevant technical officers.

And next, [page] B-235 for professional services. Is this the result of the consolidated heads? All right. There was another market increase there. How many consultants are there and are these contracts yearly? And yes, provisional services include contracts with Liquor Licensing Authority website maintenance and development services, the Digital Fare Media Project, and other consultants with short-term contracts, et cetera.

And there was another question from [page] B-235 around the professional services. How many contracts are given to Bermudians versus non-Bermudians or how many contractors? And with regard to the previous answer on professional services, the business developers and annual service and maintenance agreements for both the Liquor Licensing Authority website and the Digital Fare Media Project are overseas consultants. These represent the majority of the costs attached to professional services. For other short-term service contracts, the Ministry will seek to employ qualified Bermudians where there are some available.

Following on, [page] B-236, revenue summary. What is the current summary of compliant rentals? What are the consequences or penalties for non-compliance? Are there any non-compliant establishments? At present, approximately one-third of vacation rental property owners are compliant. So, to the listening

public, if you are operating your Airbnb or other vacation rental property and have not registered, I encourage you to do so because, apparently, we are tracking that. And the penalty for non-compliance for failure to secure a vacation rental certificate upon conviction by a court of summary jurisdiction is a fine not exceeding \$10,000. I didn't know that either, so point to note.

The next question was in relation to the business unit 81060. Why are there no performance measures for this team of one? And 81060 [business unit] falls under the Ministry Headquarters, so I assume the performance measures would apply to this section under the Ministry. And how is the . . . and it's continuing on for that same business unit or that section. How much of the budget is allocated for compensation? Is there consideration to increase the number of team members? And what led to the creation of this team of one? I think there was commentary around there being cruise ships arriving for a considerable amount of time prior to the establishment of this role and what economic impacts have been created by this team.

And so, the entire budget allocation is compensation for the one team member under the Headquarters. This section was created to manage cruise line contracts, logistics regulations, and the day-to-day coordination of cruise ship activity with each transport department and its stakeholders. And it also leads key transport projects and undertakes policy research and analysis to support the Ministry's priorities and long-term planning objectives.

The total cruise economic impact for the 2026 season is estimated at \$246.9 million overall as described in the Budget Statement under Transport Planning. And the \$38.5 million is the economic impact in government taxes. And so, for this role specifically, it is to assist with the coordination of that. I think we can all agree that we have seen market increases. If you review reports like the ones delivered by the BTA quarterly, increases in cruise ship activity is something that's been happening for a considerable amount of time. And so, it stands to reason that we would have someone who's specifically tasked with the coordination of that.

The next question we have is, what is the budget for the Bermuda National Events and Entertainment Committee and where can the 2026 national calendar be found? Okay. And so, the answer here is no dedicated budget for the Bermuda National Events and Entertainment Committee. And the website development work is currently being undertaken to publish the calendar. And so, I will revert back to the technical team to see if we have already determined what the domain will be, or the URL that people can look to access the calendar when it is ready. So, I'll come back to that one.

And next, we have the \$37 million income from the revenue, I think is what I said in the Statement for the BTA. Is this figure gross or net? And the response I'm getting is that the Bermuda Government will provide a \$19.5 million grant to the BTA for the 2026/27 year.

In this budget year, the BTA is projected to generate \$18 million through visitor fees collected from cruise ships, hotels, and vacation rentals. The BTA income from visitor fees includes \$10 million in fees from hotel guests, \$8 million in cruise visitor fees, and a half million from other revenue-generating activities. All of these figures are gross. So, to the crux of the question, was it net or gross? These are gross figures. The increase to the 2026 Government grant is aligned with the value of the grant provided to the authority in 2023. I guess to account for inflation.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Mr. [Chairman], I do have a follow-up question, a supplemental to the response to my question.

The Chairman: Junior Minister, do you want to take a follow-up question?

Sen. Mischa Fubler: I am happy to take it.

The Chairman: Okay.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: I will recommend that we slot it in at the end of the queue to ensure we have time to share the answers that have already been compiled by the technical team.

The Chairman: So, what do we do? Wait until the end, then, if that's okay with Senator Tannock.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Sure.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Well, if she could provide it now,—

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Oh, okay.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: —because I imagine it may take some time to compile the response.

Sen. Tawana Tannock: Yes. So, I mean, it should be simple. So, my question is, what was their net income? So that was the gross figure, \$37 . . . what was it, \$37 million. So, what was their net income for that . . . for this year, for the year just ended? For the year that you quoted, \$37 million gross, what was the net?

Thank you.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Moving on, the \$4 million increase for the BTA, does the Ministry have any indication of how they intend to allocate those funds? And so, yes, the grant increased from \$15.5 million in 2025/26 to \$19.5 million in 2026/27. Approximately 90 per cent of direct costs are earmarked to support sales and marketing demand generation. Funds will support Apex SailGP, Butterfield Bermuda Championship, and other high-impact activations. Additionally, it supports expansion of UK and

Canada targeting, and it supports seasonality strategy—i.e., September through April focus—and aligns resources ahead of Fairmont Southampton Princess's reopening.

The next question I have is, has the Government asked the BTA for any return on investment markers? And if so, when will they be provided in relation to the \$4 million allocation? And if they are to be provided, did the Government ask for . . . what did the Government ask for as matrices, and when will they receive them? Okay. And so, highlighting that the Bermuda Tourism Authority is an independent authority and not a board, the Board of Directors has set corporate objectives for the BTA, which include \$578 [million] to \$610 million in visitor spend, which is approximately a 5 [per cent] to 10 [per cent] increase in comparison to the 2025 metric. Secondly, diversification of feeder markets by 10 per cent . . . Oh, so, an increase of 10 per cent in these feeder markets diversification. Increase in group room nights booked by 15 per cent per group, and 7 per cent increase for leisure and air visitor seasonality and increase visitation in September through April by 10,000 visitors. And air and cruise visitors definitely recommending Bermuda as a destination to . . . 83 per cent of those polled.

And I'm happy to help. And so next I have a question, Is the qualification being given to people in the industry of persons in the Signature Programme? Okay, there's a programme in the schools as well as one that I believe is delivered by the BTA. I got a brief kind of description, and pending a meeting with the BTA so they can share more around these kinds of programmes, and . . . because I was interested, I went to the small business expo that the BEDC [Bermuda Economic Development Corporation] put on back a month or two ago, I think. I gave congratulations to them at our first sitting of the year. And so, to your question, yes, the City and Guilds Assured [AnchorBDA] qualification is offered to tourism, transport, and hospitality industry professionals, members of the public. So, those of you listening, if you are curious about enhancing your understanding of Bermuda history and culture and tourism-related data, I encourage you to register as well, and also include students in the Sandys Secondary Tourism and Hospitality Signature Programmes.

The BTA has signed a memorandum of understanding with Sandys Secondary to do the following: train teachers, enable students to earn the credential. The programme launched in the current academic year, so September 25 through June of this year, and 10 students are currently enrolled in the Signature programme, and instruction is delivered by the assigned tourism and hospitality teacher with the BTA providing additional support as needed.

Next was a question, again for the BTA, how does the Government ensure that board members are providing value for what they earn? And the answer to that I have received is the Bermuda Tourism Authority provides the Ministry with a detailed budget, projected

cash forecast, quarterly report, organisational updates, and work plan, in addition to other relevant support at the end of each quarter. This information is received and reviewed by Ministry Headquarters before consideration is given to making the next quarterly grant payment. Any concerns or issues are raised with the BTA to ensure that money being spent is in alignment with the BTA objectives.

And then another . . . okay, the next question was around the grant and how much oversight. And I think my previous response also satisfies that question.

Next for parish councils on [constituency] 20, with the recent amendment to the board fees, has there been taken into account any of these authorities to have increased spend? And so, the increase would not have been included in the budget as the legislative process for any fee change was not yet completed, unfortunately. So, something to look forward to next year. I think in the kind of discussion there, the rates have been where they're at for many years now. So, I think people will look forward to it in the forthcoming budget cycle.

And I guess I will declare my interest in this space. I chair the Wage Commission. And I have several dedicated commissioners who join for the board legislated fee of, I think it's \$50 a session, which definitely doesn't account for their expertise and experience. And so, I thank them for their participation in helping to drive the work forward of establishing a living wage for Bermuda.

[Inaudible interjections]

Sen. Mischa Fubler: So, I apologise. It's related to my interest, and I always like to advocate for the work we're doing. Cool.

And so next, performance measures. It would be helpful to know how many hotel complaints there were, like the actual number as opposed to the percentage that were responded to, investigated, and provided a written report. And for vacation rentals, there were 69 certificates issued. Has it risen or fallen, assuming all of these are compliant? And how do I know? Well, here we go. So, there was one hotel complaint during the current licensing period, which has been handled expeditiously.

The Vacation Rentals Act was enacted in 2018. The registration for the current period is below the 87 licences issued for the 2024/25 period, and the 101 licences issued for the 2023/24 period. Please note that the licensing period for vacation rental properties is from September 1 through to August 31. Vacation rental properties list their properties on various platforms, including Airbnb, Vrbo, and Bermuda Rentals, which is, I assume, how we are tracking which ones are available, and [how] I was able to provide that earlier stat around how many are not registered.

The 69 certificates referred to are those which have been issued by the Tourism Regulation and

Policy Unit. And having a certificate indicates that they are compliant. And [I] also take the opportunity here to call out that, remember, there is that distinction between the vacation rental properties wherein this Ministry is only responsible for those over the \$22,800 ARV limit, kind of the split between being within rent control or not, whereas those below the threshold fall under the responsibility of the Rent Control Department under the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Next, moving on to Head 20, Department of Sport and Recreation. Why the reduction in the number of elite athletes who received funding and the number of sports awards on page B-242? The number of elite athletes who are targeted to receive funding is based on the number of estimated athletes that meet the criteria for funding. The sports awards include a specific number of awards in defined categories. There's no reduction in the number of core awards. However, there is the ability to allocate additional awards. Some funding has been redirected to support the delivery of school sports to enhance the delivery at the grassroots level to kind of feed the pipeline, as it were, strengthening the base of the athlete pipeline to ensure sustainable development for future elite athletes.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

SENATE VISITOR

The Chairman: While we pause, perhaps I can just recognise that we have [Honourable] Minister Owen Darrell in the Senate today.

So, Minister, welcome to you.

[Committee of Supply, continuing]

The Chairman: Junior Minister, back to you.

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Yes. Thank you.

And so, I do have an answer here around the BTA Board of Directors remuneration, and they are paid \$25,000 per annum. The chairman of the board is remunerated \$35,000 per annum as of January 1, 2026. Hopefully, that answers your question.

Yes. And the next question I have is, what are some of the stated reasons for the decline in recreational programmes, percentage of users who found overall experience satisfactory? And again, I think this was one that I just posted to the team because I was curious. I anticipated this being a question. It was not highlighted, but I would have posed it if I was the Opposition. And so, you know, feedback can be fickle. If you are upset with a service, you are a lot more likely to provide feedback than if you had a good experience.

And so, again, the answer to this from the technical team, the most recent customer feedback states that while clients love their camp experience, they dread the current online first-come, first-served registration period. I, again, declare my interest. I am the

designated parent that logs on at an antisocial hour of the morning to ensure that I register my two children for summer camp. And so, I am also looking forward to seeing the new lottery system implemented that I talked about during my brief. They also stated that it needed improving as camp allotments sold out within minutes, which is true, I can attest to. And it didn't allow for everyone to participate in the process. And so, we have responded to that feedback.

Next question, which two National Sports Governing Bodies [NSGBs] did not apply for sports development programmes? There was a question from one of my colleagues around the funding and application and how that works. And so, I had a similar question when we did kind of the supplementary funding in the fall of last year. And then the part of the process is dependent on what that association or club or whoever applies for. And so, obviously, not everyone's going to get the total amount they asked for in every case. But in general, we attempt to allocate it and in response to what the request is.

And going through . . . Okay. And so, the school sports programme, can you advise how many sporting events the budget covers for the year? The school sports programme included 16 different sports through festivals, tournaments, meets and leagues, over 100 different festivals, tournaments, meets and leagues throughout the academic year. So, it appears that is not school specific. Some of them are outside of school but targeting school-age children.

And next, looking at business unit 30065, how is it determined which sporting bodies get funds? What procedures are in place to follow up after the funds have been released to ensure they are being used properly? How often can a sporting body apply? And so, the sports investment programme funding is specifically available to the National Sports Governing Bodies, as well as the Bermuda Olympic Association, National Sports Centre, and BSADA, Bermuda Sport Anti-Doping Agency. And these are operational grants for their organisations. The NSGBs must satisfy the sports recognition policy criteria to be recognised and be eligible for funding. Funding is available on an annual basis across three areas via the sports investment programme framework, high performance, junior development, and coach or official development. And the quotes and invoices must be provided. Financial reports are required to be submitted at the end of each fiscal year, as well as attendance to an annual review meeting.

Next question, is the decrease in awards due to a lack of funding? And I refer back to my brief. The funding was redirected to the delivery of school sports events, which I think you touched on, and it's part of your question.

Next, [the] one and a half million allocated to business unit 30180, are these primarily used for out of school camps? Do they also cover morning care and after school programmes? And if so, what percentage

of these funds are used for those purposes? And so, the allocated funds in 30180 are primarily for Camp Connect. The department does not do before and after school programmes, only summer day camp, the Camp Connect. And Camp Connect consists of the full funding of government camps, recreational travel, supplies, and services. Additionally, the private camps that have agreed to assist the Government in meeting their mandate are assisted with this funding.

Next, 30090, performance measures, is this . . . so the survey, is it online and can it direct you to where the public can have their say on the Motorsports Park? And I think Senator Cunningham then expanded it to any of the business units. And so, surveys are currently distributed to three sporting bodies who rent the motor park. There's currently no avenue for the general public to provide feedback . . . So, the feedback is coming from the sporting bodies themselves.

And I will come back to that one around the consultants. How does the Government justify providing funding to golf courses to improve accessibility when user fees . . . I'd just like to clarify that these are the membership fees and some of the green fees are increasing. Is the Government behind the changes instituted at Port Royal? Are the funds, I guess, in support of the changes instituted at Port Royal? And are they being affected by the Government golf board? And are the funds allocated to be used to offset increased fees? And so, funding is used for upgrading and maintaining the golf course. Port Royal also hosts the PGA where there is an international standard that must be maintained year-round in order to remain compliant, which adds to operational cost. The increase of fees has been approved by the Minister. Funds allocated will be used for facility upgrades and salary uplift.

And again, declaring my interest, I'm quite the avid golfer as well. I picked it up during the pandemic. And so, I have done my fair share of travel to play golf in a variety of locations, some of them public access. And I think it's important to highlight kind of the average cost that goes into the maintenance and upkeep of courses. And so, when I was doing my research, I came across [the] top 100 ranked courses in the US, kind of on the PGA tour. They are spending an estimated \$2 [million] to \$5 million annually in maintenance and upkeep. And then kind of the upper echelon like TPC Sawgrass or Pebble Beach or Torrey Pines, \$3 [million] to \$5 million plus spent on annual maintenance. And also, in regard to green fees, even when I went to Cancun, I was paying \$200-plus to play a round of golf at a public access golf course that did not have membership as an option.

And so, it is a strain on our seniors. You did note that. And I'd also like to highlight that there is a separate tier for seniors, specifically for membership and green fee rates. We understand the kind of constraints around the fixed income that many of them are on. And so, yes, I think it's obviously not ideal, but if we want to ensure that the standard of the public golf

courses is commensurate with what's required, especially in Port Royal's case for hosting the PGA, then changes were required in the funding.

And it is, I would say, objectively unfair to the wider public who does not golf to ask them to pay more to maintain the golf courses when the men and . . . and, you know, folks from the environmental sector may have challenges with it around the use of the green space, as it were.

The Chairman: Junior Minister, just as a time check, we are about one minute away from 2:30, which would be three hours for—

Sen. Mischa Fubler: Oh, I guess I have to wrap it up.

The Chairman: —so if you could wrap it up so we can ask you to . . .

Sen. Mischa Fubler: And this one's important. I'll do this, my last question . . . response, I suppose, given the time.

When was the last time that audited financials were provided from Port Royal to the Government to necessitate these funds and the increase in broader fees? And as it is in the public domain, as you mentioned, there is an audit in progress for the fiscal year 2021/22. Unaudited financials are provided to the Ministry annually.

And as you have mentioned, Mr. Chairman, before we run out of time, I move that Heads 71, 20, and 30 be approved as printed.

The Chairman: Is there any objection?

Hearing no objection.

These heads are now moved.

[Motion carried: Head 71, Ministry of Tourism Headquarters; Head 30, Marine and Ports; and Head 20, Sport and Recreation, were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2026/27.]

The Chairman: Thank you very much, Junior Minister Fubler, and your technical officers for a very excellent presentation on Tourism, Marine and Ports, and Sport and Recreation.

Now I'll turn the Chair over to my learned colleague, Senator Tawana Tannock to chair the Education Ministry. Thank you.

[Pause]

[Sen. Tawana Tannock, Chairman]

The Chairman: Good afternoon, Senators.

We are now in Committee of the whole [Senate] to discuss the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2026/27.

This afternoon we will continue, but we will start with Education, which is Head 16 and Head 17, and will be presented by the Junior Minister of Education . . . No, sorry, the Minister of Education. The Minister of Education. My apologies, the *Minister* of Education, Minister and Senator Caesar. And so, we will begin at 2:32 [pm], and we have four hours for this head.

My apologies, Minister.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: No worries, no worries. I don't mind being a junior. That means I'm younger than you think I am.

[Laughter]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Yes, it's nice to have a little levity this afternoon.

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Thank you.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now take under consideration Head 16, Ministry of Education Headquarters, and also Head 17, Department of Education.

Madam Chairman, today I present a budget that views every dollar not just as an expense, but as a building block for our Island's future. My moral mission as Minister of Education is to ensure that the budget process bridges the gap between financial figures and the positive impact on students by providing educators with the required resources and conducive learning environments that ensure every student, regardless of their background, has the quality education that they need to thrive personally, academically, and emotionally.

Madam Chairman, I am pleased to present the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the Ministry of Education for the fiscal year 2026/27. These estimates cover the Ministry of Education Headquarters, Head 16; and the Department of Education, Head 17. One would note that in another place, we did also present Bermuda College Head [41], the latter of which was not actually selected for today's debate.

The budget is a clear statement of what the Government prioritises for children, families, and educators, reflected not only in the spend, but in how the resources are allocated. The budget is a demonstration of responsible choices that will create lasting benefits for Bermudians. In 2025/26, as the newly appointed Minister of Education, I introduced a stabilisation focus so the public school system could deliver consistent, high-quality learning and instruction while longer-term improvements continued.

It was my assessment that the system required a period of recalibration in order to focus on variables

that had the most significant impact on student achievement. Madam Chairman, in 2026/27, the Ministry will continue to build on the stabilisation plan with an acute emphasis on improving student outcomes to advance sustainable transformation efforts with equitable investment across all public schools as a non-negotiable.

The Ministry of Education budget for 2026/27 is \$156.5 million, a year over year increase of \$7.3 million, or 5 per cent. This increase strengthens the system's capacity to improve learning outcomes, fill critical staffing, and invest in safer, conducive learning environments. The budget is allocated to

- strengthen school improvement, supervision, and learning outcomes;
- expand high quality professional learning for educators to deepen subject knowledge and teaching practice;
- fund and fill long-standing vacancies in critical leadership, school staffing, curriculum, and operational roles;
- increase grants that support professional development for staff, early intervention, and enrichment in life learning across the system;
- advance the transformation of Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy; and
- expand youth counselling and coordinate support for child and adolescent mental health.

Madam President, capital funding has increased by 73 per cent. This increase will support the stabilisation and transformation plan. There will be targeted upgrades across the entire public school system. Priorities include

- phased safety and security upgrades, particularly at middle and senior schools;
- upgrades to school electrical systems;
- strong information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure to support continuing learning, parent communication, and daily school operations;
- improvements required for accreditation standards, and
- improvements to classroom air quality and cooling.

For additional context, the original reform practice around infrastructure development invited school teams in transition to becoming para schools to dream big, which resulted in plans that were not costed or tested for feasibility. We continue to respect the work that has been done and work towards finding a balance with innovative improvement, realistic goals and fiscal responsibility.

Madam Chairman, I am pleased to report that the Ministry scholarship and awards funding has increased by \$420,125, bringing the total to \$2.2 million for post-secondary education. Funding is also provided for Bermuda College, supporting delivery of its 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, expanded programme

accessibility, stronger alignment with Bermuda's workforce and economic priorities, and an accreditation review.

Overall, the 2026/27 Budget positions the Ministry of Education to move from stabilisation towards continuous cycles of improvement prioritising safety, equity, inclusion, workforce alignment, stronger outcomes for students and staff effectiveness and well-being.

HEAD 16—MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HEADQUARTERS

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, I will now begin my substantive presentation on Head 16, which is the Ministry of Education.

As found on page B-135 for the 2026/27 fiscal year, Head 16, the Ministry of Education Headquarters has been allocated \$6,968,027, a decrease of \$547,125 compared to 2025/26.

The Ministry is responsible for providing strategic leadership and policy direction for education and lifelong learning for the people of Bermuda. The supporting objectives of the Ministry are delivered under its sole programme 1601, General, which consists of the following business units:

- 26000 General Administration
- 26080 Grants to External Bodies
- 26090 Scholarships and Awards, and
- 26140 Project Offers or Education Reform Unit (as named in the Budget Book)

Business Unit 26000, General Administration

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, business unit 26000 General is budgeted at \$1,155,636, and it represents an increase of \$55,020. This business unit funds the salaries of the Ministry of Education Headquarters, a small team of six full-time equivalents. This business unit also funds training, travel, advertising, and promotion, local consultant services, rentals, board and committee fees, office supplies, and the Minister's annual debate challenge initiated in 2024 by the former Minister of Education.

Bermuda's premier debate competition was created for public and private school students aged 10 to 14 years old. Debating fosters critical thinking, advanced research skills, and structured persuasive communication, helping to prepare and inspire future lawyers, youth parliamentarians, and a new generation of aspiring legislators and leaders.

I am pleased to confirm that the debate competition will resume in the fall of 2026.

Business Unit 26080, Grants to External Bodies

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, business unit 206080 Grants to External Bodies is budgeted at \$987,000, an increase of \$262,000. The

36 per cent increase in this allocation reflects the importance of educational, social, and economic investment in young children, families, and educators.

As per my strategic direction, funding for grants is awarded to support the stabilisation priorities and advance educational transformation. These grants strengthen early and emerging literacy, provide educational assessments to children who have learning differences, support continuing professional learning for educators, and guarantee local post-secondary tuition support for eligible public-school graduates through the Bermuda College Promise Programme, or the College Promise Programme. Grant recipients possess experience in their respective fields, and they are critical partners to education.

Grants directed to programming and services for young children and students in the public school system who are

1. local service providers who provide programmes and services that support stabilisation and educational transformation;
2. specialists in their fields; and
3. attuned to existing challenges and changing needs and advances in research and best practices.

The grants allow investment in qualified local in-service providers and strengthen the sustainability of educational programmes and services.

Madam Chairman, I'm pleased to announce that the grants to external bodies for the 2026/27 will fund targeted reading instruction and intervention services provided by the reading clinic for students who are struggling readers, including learners with dyslexia and other learning differences. This grant provides screening and assessment where needed and evidence-based structured literacy support to strengthen students' ability to access the full curriculum across subject areas, improving overall teaching and learning outcomes.

Combined educational, therapeutic, and recreational programmes are provided by WindReach [Bermuda] using approaches to help students, particularly those with special needs or developmental challenges. It helps build communication, self-regulation, social skills, and functional independence. These supports strengthen readiness to learn, reduce barriers to attendance and engagement, and complement school-based learning plans through structured activities in safe, accessible environments.

The Sloop Foundation innovatively provides STEAM education services, which are partner-delivered science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics programmes that strengthen student engagement and foundational skills. Activities may include robotics, electronics, design, and digital making, supporting mathematics and literacy skill development, problem-solving, and creativity that support school children.

The Bermuda Zoological Society science programmes consist of interactive science classes and

field-based learning, which reinforces science curriculum outcomes, builds students' understanding of Bermuda's ecosystem and conservation efforts. This programme is delivered through the Bermuda Aquarium, Museum, and Zoo, better known as BAMZ.

Next, Madam Chairman, in-school and community music education programmes are taught by the Menuhin Foundation that include weekly group string instruction in primary schools and performance opportunities. Music learning strengthens students' well-being and engagement. It builds discipline and teamwork and supports whole child development that complements classroom teaching and learning.

Public school science education programmes are provided by the Bermuda Underwater Exploration Institute, or BUEI, experiences and sustainability education, including Eco-Schools, which is the international award and student action programme where students carry out sustainability audits and implement sustainable practices. These programmes strengthen science learning experiences through hands-on enquiry. They build environmental literacy and provide authentic context for children and learning across science, social studies, and project-based work.

Next, Madam Chairman, the National Educators Institute, or NEI, professional learning programmes invest in teaching practice, instructional leadership, and system capacity to deliver improvements in teaching and learning. NEI is a professional learning hub that provides training, networking, research, and resources for Bermuda's educators.

Coding instruction is taught by Connectech, so public school students can learn coding concepts through practical, age-appropriate activities. This builds computational thinking, problem-solving and creativity, and supports student pathways for future learning and technology.

Keep Bermuda Beautiful's (KBB) school-based environmental education programme consists of water reduction lessons, water . . . I'm sorry, waste reduction lessons, marine debris surveys, school assemblies, and related activities. This programme builds student environmental stewardship and enquiry skills and provides applied learning opportunities connected to science and social studies.

Public school experiential learning field trips also reinforce classroom instruction through real-world experiences. Funding offsets costs, increasing access for student participation in learning experiences, both locally and abroad, which is available through an application process.

C.A.R.E. Learning Centre Bermuda provides an alternative learning environment, academic upgrading, and computer-assisted learning. Programmes help students and adult learners strengthen core skills, re-engage with education, and progress towards recognised credentials (for example, GED preparation or testing support), improving employability, and life-learning outcomes.

The Bermuda College Promise student awards provides tuition for up to two years for eligible Bermuda public senior school graduates to attend Bermuda College. The awards can be used to fund certificate programmes, associate degrees, and/or credits that can be transferred to a four-year institution. It should be noted that beginning this year, the GPA average is now 2.5 versus 3.0, which will allow even more students to access post-secondary education at Bermuda's only college location.

Madam Chairman, each grant is consistent with the Ministry's Stabilisation Objectives and the Department of Education's Supporting Priorities, which will be detailed under Head 17, the Department of Education.

Business Unit 26090, Scholarships and Awards

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, this business unit is budgeted at \$2,185,150, an increase of \$420,125. Madam Chairman, the 24 per cent increase brings the total spend on a wide range of scholarships and awards to \$2.2 million.

In the fiscal year ending 2025, over 70 Bermudian students benefited from Ministry scholarships and awards, and in many instances, provided life-changing opportunities for aspiring and continuing students. For the upcoming fiscal year, the Ministry is proud to indicate that an increased number of students will be able to access tertiary education.

In particular, the Bermuda Government scholarships have increased by two, specifically to support students demonstrating proficiency and interest in the creative arts and health or sports-related fields. This is being done in response to the noted additional number of applicants who are interested in those areas of study but have found it difficult to secure funding elsewhere. It is this Ministry's aim that students are prepared for a diverse range of fields for Bermuda's future world of work in the economy. Increased funding in these intended and necessary careers supports that vision.

Additional funding has also been allocated across several other award categories, including technical and vocational, applied science, non-traditional, teacher education, and teacher sabbatical awards.

Madam Chairman, scholarships and awards are delivered through a structured annual cycle that includes application management, scholarship committee assessment, interviews and recommendations, and the timely disbursement of approved awards. The vast majority of the work under this business unit is conducted behind the scenes, but is highly visible during scholarship season, which is upon us.

The Ministry informs, supports and attracts applicants with diverse interests, backgrounds, experiences, and academic and technical pursuits. To improve access to scholarships and awards, the Ministry, through the scholarship manager, continues targeted outreach and service improvements, including:

- the BermudaScholarships.bm portal and partner coordination with the Bermuda Foundation for Insurance Studies, BFIS, (thanks to my fellow Senator across the way);
- participation in monthly Bermuda Scholarship steering committee meetings to strengthen portable visibility, functionality, and long-term direction;
- maintenance planning, marketing, user experience improvements, and expanding island-wide access.

Supplementary support includes scholarship promotion and application assistance through weekly accountability workshops and career fair engagement.

Parent and family engagement is managed as well by the scholarship manager through the delivery of targeted parent-facing information sessions, including participation in the Mirrors programme, known as "Finding Funds for College" webinar, to provide families with clear scholarship timelines, application guidance, and practical planning tools. We also engage past scholarship recipients who speak about their experiences, which is always very helpful.

Yes, the scholarship manager also does school-based outreach, and that consists of scholarship presentations delivered to students and youth-serving programmes, including The Berkeley Institute and CedarBridge S4 assemblies and informationals, and the PeerForward Spring Training Camp, among others.

There's also youth-led promotion. So, the use of scholarship recipients, as I mentioned, to increase awareness and credibility of Ministry support, including student contributions during the Mirrors webinar, just aforementioned, highlighting how the Ministry funding has supported their academic pathway.

Finally, there is communication and marketing, a continued use of past recipients to promote scholarships. There is also an animated promotional video directing young people, particularly on social media platforms, that helps to strengthen engagement and application uptake.

Madam Chairman, promises made, promises kept. The Ministry of Education has achieved the mandate of increasing the scope of scholarship offerings and expanding the College Promise Programme to support young adults in their academic pursuits.

Business Unit 26140, Project Office (ERU) and Professional Services

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, business unit 26140, which supports the Project Office, formerly known as the Education Reform Unit, and associated professional services, is budgeted at \$2,640,241, a decrease of \$1,284,270. The decrease in this allocation is due to the conclusion of the last contract for the overseas consultants Innovation Unit, (now

known as ThirdStory) valued at \$2,194,311 for the 2025/26 year.

The Project Office is a programme within the Ministry of Education Headquarters, which assists in stabilising the current state of public education while continuing to transform the desired state of an improved education system. The focus of the Project Office has been tightened to focus on teaching, learning, and student outcomes. Mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the Project Office, schools, and the Department of Education [DOE] are in place to ensure alignment and cohesion of the critical transformative work under development.

Madam Chairman, the phrase *platform in motion* validates active, ongoing progress and the transformation of the Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy, which represents a significant milestone for the education transformation work that has commenced for special education. This is especially exciting for me. It is a structured, evidence-formed, and research-based process, which is underway to design a new specialised school for students with severe to profound intellectual disabilities, complex developmental delays, physical disabilities, and those who require multi-layered interdisciplinary support. The foundational work has already been completed, including research to ground the approach in current and international best practices, early engagement with parents and staff, and a clear co-design methodology to guide decision-making and build shared ownership.

Progress to date also demonstrates exceptional momentum and participation, as demonstrated by 36 applications and a selection process that resulted in a diverse, multidisciplinary school transformation team, which includes educators, parents, therapists, industry technical experts, and community stakeholders.

Onboarding phases are well underway with strong attendance and a practical structure aligned to priority areas, such as infrastructure, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, therapeutic support, stakeholder engagement, and unique school features.

This workstream is being led by a local educator, Mrs. Clindel Lowe. Mrs. Lowe has been actively engaged in the transformation work to date. As a result, she has developed the necessary capabilities and agile mind-set, which positions her to boldly lead the transformation, the journey, and which includes a level of high excellence.

Simultaneously, the Ministry is delivering on the mandate to promote and proudly celebrate home-grown talent leading systems improvements and transformative work that will impact the lives of our most vulnerable students and their families. To support this work stream, scheduled collaboration with school leadership, teachers, and the Student Services section of the Department of Education is arranged to maintain alignment, accountability, and transparency. Regular engagement with parents and staff is a strong component of the methodology. Recently, the lead of this work

stream provided an overview of the work to date to the Bermuda Union of Teachers, as several of the members of the transformation team are educators.

Madam Chairman, stabilisation and educational transformation work underway with the special school will also be supported by policy development and special education legislation in 2026/27 and guided by the insights emanating from this design process.

Madam Chairman, the Ministry of Education continues to deliver on the mandate of an Education Authority, which requires transparency and a strategic rollout plan. In spite of past delays in addressing potential legal considerations, I am pleased to advise that, after several rounds of deliberation to establish an Education Authority, a draft Bill has been achieved.

In line with our ongoing commitment to meaningfully engage in two-way communication with education partners and stakeholder representatives, the Ministry Headquarters will meet with unions, school boards, PTA executives, Department of Education staff, teachers, principals, parents and others on the development of the Education Authority. This is an important opportunity for the Ministry to listen to the various interests and questions and to use the feedback to refine and improve an iteration of the draft Bill in a collaborative approach. That includes stakeholders in the continuing Education Authority phases of work, which requires legislation and shared implementation.

Madam Chairman, as we reflect on what has been shared so far in this brief, it is very evident that transformative practices and principles of change management remain as a priority, and hard work has not paused. From manifesto to milestones, the journey of a series of milestones and achievements have been summarised today.

Madam Chairman, effective transformation is not about a single moment in time, but a commitment to continuous improvement cycles and focusing on variables that have the most impact on student outcomes. I believe that bears repeating. *Effective transformation is not about a single moment in time or an end goal, but a commitment to continuous improvement cycles and focusing on variables that have the most impact on student outcomes.* The Ministry of Education Headquarters remains steadfast in the pursuit of providing all students with a quality education as we continue to work through structural tier changes, inclusive of infrastructure challenges.

Madam Chairman, I now turn to the subjective analysis of current account estimates on page B-136. The subjective analysis of current account estimates are shown for the Ministry of Headquarters. Salaries stand at \$717,000 and show a minimum increase of \$40,000 when compared to 2025/26.

Madam Chairman, the travel expenditure line item of \$97,000 remains the same when compared to last year. This funds the attendance at conferences and engaging other jurisdictions that have implemented

education improvements that may prove beneficial to the Bermuda public school system.

Expenditure for grants and contributions increased by \$672,000. The full breakdown of the \$3,125,000 budgeted for grants and contributions can be found in the Budget Book on page C-18.

Madam Chairman, \$2,118,000 has been budgeted for professional services. This reflects a decrease of \$1,260,000 for consultancy services, primarily as a result of the end of the Innovation [Unit] or ThirdStory contract at the end of 2025.

Madam Chairman, on page B-136, the number of full-time equivalents or employees in the Ministry of Education Headquarters remain the same as last year at six FTEs and funds all posts except for the post of the permanent secretary.

Madam Chairman, finally on page B-137, performance measures for the Ministry of Education Headquarters are outlined. The targeted outcomes for last year were either achieved or are in the process of being completed.

I would like to highlight performance measures for business unit 26080, Grants to External Bodies, as all grant applications to recipients were processed by the target date of July 31 and all grant finances and stated outcomes were reviewed by March 31.

For business unit 26090, Scholarships and Awards, the Scholarships and Awards Committee made recommendations for recipients to the Minister by the deadline of July 31 and the Ministry Headquarters ensured that scholarship funds were dispersed by October 31 of last year.

Madam Chairman, this budget reflects the commitment to stabilisation, impactful transformative practices, and school improvement planning that is student-centred while maintaining fiscal responsibility. I am confident that the approval of the budget for Head 16 will provide the enabling conditions to achieve strategic priorities.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the work of the entire team ably led by the permanent secretary who supports one of government's largest ministries, if not the largest, and a large portion of Bermuda's community and ultimately our future.

Thank you, Madam Chairman. This concludes my presentation for the budget for Head 16, the Ministry of Education Headquarters, and I welcome questions from fellow colleagues.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Would any Senator like to speak to these heads?

Senator Cunningham . . . and just a time check. It's 3:07 [pm]. We started at 2:33 [pm], so we still have a good bit of time.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I want to thank the Minister of Education for her brief and I'm excited to hear moving to transformation from stabilisation and I look forward to hearing continued updates as we go through the year. I will start at the beginning.

So, I think a lot of this is the accountability. We are looking at numbers, and I believe the Minister mentioned it's not just dollars, it's building blocks for the Island's future. And I wholeheartedly think that the Education budget is the most important section of the entire large book. But, that being said (and this isn't necessarily a question, this is more of a statement), if you look at Education versus every other Ministry, Education's budget for the entire Ministry, as per page B-134, is up 5 per cent to \$156.46 million. Conversely, Justice is up 10 [per cent], Health is up 23 [per cent], Public Works and Environments is up 8 [per cent]. No other one was below it. Economy and Labour was also at 5 per cent. So, I just find . . . quite frankly, I find it quite disheartening that it didn't get what I would have thought was the monetary amount it deserves. But you could argue we have fewer students and fewer classrooms. So, it's just about where the money is being spent and hopefully invested in the right way.

So, I will start with the . . . well, actually, I looked up and I don't know where you . . . who decides the mission of each Ministry, but I thought the use of "exemplary" was quite interesting. And so, I actually had to look it up. The Ministry of Education's mission is *to provide an exemplary education system in the government school system*. And I looked that up. And one said very good." And I thought, *Well, that doesn't sound good*. But then when it says "an example for others to follow," I quite like that. Especially when the Minister then went on to speak about how the Ministry staff are going to other jurisdictions. So, we want to be the ones in the future, I would assume, where others will follow. So, let's keep moving on that.

Department objective number three, "improve stakeholder confidence through consultation and engagement." I would assume these objectives are ongoing and I would assume, and this could be a question, that the stakeholders are, you know, the whole raft of the Bermuda, you know, from the educators and administrators in the schools, to the department, to the parents, to the public and private sector of the Island.

I also liked the lifelong learning element to the fourth objective, because I do see, you know, education as being a lifelong . . . A lifelong—

The Chairman: Sorry. So your first question is related to objective number three?

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Yes.

The Chairman: And who are the stakeholders?

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Yes.

The Chairman: And Minister, do you want to collect all the questions first? Or do you want to respond as they come?

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: All first.

The Chairman: All first. Okay. Thank you.
Senator Cunningham.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Thank you.

So, when we look at . . . so I mentioned the total budget. But the grants to external bodies have increased. And I did appreciate the . . . I don't know that we got it last year, all the different grant recipients. And I would like to say, I did have some feedback about the GPA reduction. But I'm delighted to hear the College Promise extension to the 2.5 GPA. I will probably be asking a question in September/October to see how much of an impact that had for the 2.5 to the 3.0 GPAs. What level of inclusion? I guess we don't know those numbers yet because we probably wouldn't have it from last year because those students wouldn't have been eligible. But nonetheless, [I am] excited to hear about those initiatives.

And then on to scholarships and awards. And I appreciate the scholarships and awards manager, who I have worked very closely with over the last two months as we push out BermudaScholarships.com, but she works incredibly hard. And, you know, I think it's great that we view this as an investment in the future. I do have a few questions. So, you talked about 70 students for last year and hoping to increase that number with more awards this year.

My first question on the scholarships is, How are government scholarships aligned with our current and projected labour market needs? So, are we undertaking analysis to make sure that these students, once they graduate and return to Bermuda, are actually going to be qualified for employment upon their return? And then, and I don't know if they are tracked, but what proportion of recipients return to Bermuda after completing their studies? And do we know whether they are actually employed in the area that they are qualified in? [For example], are they doctors and they are working in hospitality or are they doctors and they are working in the hospital?

And then I have a question because I believe some of the Ministry awards are just for one year, whereas I think some are for the entire duration of the programme. And I'm just . . . I'm very cognisant of the fact that some of these students may have one or two years. And this is actually a message to the listening audience as well. Students think, *Oh, I've got my first and second year fully funded, or most of the way funded*, but they haven't thought about years three and four, which then means they have a crippling financial impact. Either someone's taking out loans, or they have to drop out. So, I'm just wondering if Government has actually taken that into account and maybe offer

smaller amounts, but over a longer duration so that these students have more likeliness, more likelihood of actually completing those degrees and qualifications.

And then I guess, and this is a big one that we track, but is there a tracking of, you know, if the award has a 3.0 GPA, for example, to be eligible, is there tracking of that 3.0 GPA as they go through their studies to ensure that they maintain the eligibility criteria to continue getting the funding?

And then with regard to the funding, obviously it's great. We are seeing a 24 per cent increase to the \$2.18 million. But is that aligned with obviously increasing expenses overseas? International education is going up significantly. I know the UK is probably one of the least expensive jurisdictions, but, you know, a lot of US funding is now constrained with the present current administration pulling education funding for overseas students. So, I'm just hoping that, you know, where \$10,000, Madam Chairman, 10 years ago might have got you, you know, halfway there, it might now only be a third of the way there. So, looking at what that education inflation is.

And then . . . so I guess what . . . so I know actually in the Cabinet Office debate last year they talked about tracking students. But the Ministry obviously will have quite a big database. I think over 700 students apply for your awards every year. Therefore, you have an idea of how many of these students are going at least to which jurisdictions. And I think in particular for those who are going to the United States, does the Ministry undertake any kind of support or protection of those students who are studying currently in the United States?

And I say that because we had one student who we spoke to who had ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] on campus in New Jersey. And so, I just think if we're providing funding for these students, are we also looking out for their well-being, supporting them and whatever else? I mean, we can't necessarily tell them where they can go. And, you know, we do . . . I . . . my colleagues and I know a lot of the educators will guide on different jurisdictions and the pros and cons. But it's just, you know, given the current uncertainty, are we watching out for the welfare of our students overseas? And I guess, . . . well, no, actually, I'm not going to go there.

And okay . . . so that . . . and I will say my biggest gratitude to your colleague, Shanaye Smith, who has done a great deal. As mentioned, she's on the steering committee for Bermuda scholarships. And I think that is one of the best platforms. And I assume the Ministry funds . . . we do . . . There is a stipend for the maintenance fees of that website. But Shanaye sits on that steering committee and is an integral piece of the puzzle and has also, as mentioned, done a lot of the outreach to the schools and parents. So, congratulations to her.

Then moving on to the Educational Reform Unit. So, I wasn't sure if it's now called the Project

Office, but I understand that the contract with Innovation Unit has now completely ended and that this new office will focus on stabilising and pushing forward. With the comments about Hope Academy, have parents been included? I assume parents are quite an integral part of that transformation, given the specialised nature of the students. But you also mentioned 36 applications. Was that to [Dame Marjorie Bean] Hope Academy and on top of who is there already, the current . . . I wasn't sure about the 36 applications. But I think, yes, the continued . . . well, Hope Academy is a needed institution. And I think potentially we might need more spaces available.

Then the Education Authority. [I am] delighted to hear that there is a draft Bill. The Opposition would like to be included in the consultation with the collaborative approach. We would like to see its independence. So, we believe that educators should be running this Authority for the benefit of, obviously, the student outcomes that are high on your list. And I think taking the politics out of Education, so it's not run on, you know, an election cycle or anything like that. You just, you know, let educators run education.

A few more questions. One, you talked about travel and how the Ministry had gone to other jurisdictions that have got good public education systems. I was just wondering if you could give examples of some of those jurisdictions.

And then my final question is directed at the Minister, so hopefully she can answer it. But what would you say are your top two to three priorities of this year? You know, what would your main goals be for the Ministry to achieve in 2026/27?

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

Would . . . Minister, would you like to respond or take other questions?

[No audible response.]

The Chairman: Thank you.

Would any other Senator like to speak to this head?

Senator Wight.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

After that array of questions, that doesn't leave much for the rest of us. That was very comprehensive.

So, I only have one question, and that is in relation to the grants and contributions. If the Minister could just provide . . . it's a big number. If I look on page C-18, which she referred us to, it's over a million dollars and a big increase over last year, \$200,000 increase over last year.

So, if she could just provide maybe the top two or three, you know, where the grants are going, because it's, you know . . . external bodies is a pretty generic term. So, if we could just be provided with the top two or three largest bodies that the grants are made to,

that would be very helpful. So, thank you, Madam Chairman.

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

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Sorry, I forgot my capital acquisitions piece, if I may.

On page . . . Oh, is that C . . . Maybe it's department, but I think it's Ministry, [pages] C-11, C-12. On page C-12. And it falls under Ministry of Education. So, we will go with it being Ministry of Education. For [page] C-12 line 76600, Sandys Middle School Furniture and Equipment, new, is \$460,000. Per the Senate meeting in November it was confirmed that the Sandys Middle School was going to be the Signature Learning School for hospitality and education and tourism. And so, I just wondered if this . . . if that is still ongoing. Has it been rolled out with students enrolled? And I assume that this furniture acquisition is for the setup of the new Signature Programme.

Oh, and then another one on the \$2.3 million, so on line item 76081 on page C-12, the allocation for computer equipment. And so, I was just wondering if students are loaned these computers or if they are, you know, are they given them? [Or] is this just updates and upgrades to existing equipment? Because one of the kind of outcomes I would say, or accountability thing, is how are we looking at technology first if it's not actually improving our student outcomes? And \$2.39 [million] is a significant amount of spend on computers.

I have one more question. And I am not sure if it's Ministry or department, but there are a number of students transitioning out of the public education system who . . . obviously some go to the private system, some will go overseas, and some are going into the homeschool system. And so, I am just wondering where the oversight of the homeschool students, whether they are in, you know, identified homeschool environments or being schooled at home, where is the oversight for those students coming from? Is it a Ministry role? And obviously given, you know, it is a legitimate educational choice for certain parents. So, I just want to see that. Are we tracking the outcomes from those homeschool institutions?

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Cunningham.

Would any other Senator like to speak to this head?

Senator Rogers.

Sen. David Rogers: Similarly, I only have about one or two questions.

With regard to the Reform Unit, you said they would be undertaking stabilisation activities. So, I just want to hear a little bit more about what those stabilisation activities might include. Just to have a better understanding of the strategy associated with that.

In addition, there is a \$1.2 million reduction from that unit, and I'm assuming it corresponds to the professional service reduction, which is about a million two. So, then my question is [regarding] the stabilisation task force or stabilisation group. Is that primarily made of consultants as well? And if so, about how many will be conducting those activities?

Thank you so much.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Rogers.

[Pause]

The Chairman: To the listening audience, we will just wait while the Minister gets answers to some of the questions that have been asked. Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Okay, thank you, Madam Chairman.

Seeing no other questions at this time, I will begin as I gather additional interventions from my technical team. But I do have some of those answers and so I can provide them at this time.

And I know that my Senator opposite . . . Senator Cunningham and I are very like-minded as it pertains to ensuring that our . . . that education has the focus that it has. And so, I do appreciate her comments in that regard. And so, yes, selfishly, as the Minister of Education, I do believe that we are most important. We affect not just children as they graduate, but when they start as well. Right? And it affects not just students, but parents. It affects our workforce, ultimately. And so, I do believe that education is, again, the most important Ministry that we have.

And so, I would like to actually speak specifically at this time to grants and scholarships and questions that were posed specifically around that. And as it pertains to alignment with future readiness, I will say that our Signature Learning Programmes and strands do speak to areas that have been identified for Bermuda and for the level of interest for our students in terms of what is required in the economy. That is why some of those programmes actually were adopted by specific senior schools.

I will say that there is also collaboration and consultation with our other Ministry partners and our bodies, such as the Department of Workforce Development, the National Training Board, and obviously Bermuda College as to whether the grants and scholarships that young people are looking for, whether they are given direction. And I can say that having served as the chair of the board, the Scholarship Committee, I should say many moons ago, I do know that oftentimes if a student is coming in for an interview, et cetera, the questions are asked and they are given guidance as to what [they] consider for the future and the future of Bermuda. And so, yes, there is alignment ultimately with the labour markets.

If somebody wants to be, I don't know, something that Bermuda just doesn't have, like a cocoa bean farmer, is that actually going to make sense for somebody pursuing that? And so, the Ministry, the committee does guide young people. Right? I mean, it may be . . . yes, I'm sorry. I don't mean to be flippant. But we don't have cocoa bean farms in Bermuda, so why would we encourage someone to do something like that? But yes, the guidance is given when young people do come. Maybe [they] want to consider something alternatively or something that's more aligned with something that will give [them] a future and be able to enter the world of work in Bermuda. So, yes, there is alignment. But we do support young people and, you know, we do have young people who pursue things that in some degree when they first finish may not immediately return to Bermuda but can use the skills and do return. So, there is that level of intervention as well.

The question was, how are government scholarships aligned with projected labour needs? And as I said, and as I just explained, there is engagement also with parents and students through the informationals. And I do believe that Senator Cunningham and others who are involved recognise that informational guidance is given not just to students, but also to parents to guide their young people in directions, obviously, that will make sense for them to return and have a meaningful and contributing career in Bermuda.

So, one of the questions was, what portion of recipients return and are employed in Bermuda following graduation? And as it stands right now, there isn't direct tracking, because as one would know, those of us who may have gone on to tertiary education in other countries, sometimes you are bright-eyed and bushy-tailed when you turn up on campus, and ultimately, your direction may change. And that's not to say that we don't still continue to collaborate with young people when they have received funds from us. There is the responsibility to maintain a sufficient GPA, to provide transcripts along the way, particularly if they are applying consecutively. We need to know and understand how well that young person is doing, making sure that if there does seem to be some level of concern, that there are questions asked. And again, support and guidance is given. So direct tracking doesn't necessarily happen. However, we do ensure that we stay in touch with young people who have been given funds, from a fiscal responsibility level, to ensure that those young people are providing us with updates as to where they are in their education and how well they're doing along that journey.

So, I think I have also answered the question, is there a level of tracking to make sure that there's a level of eligibility criteria? And absolutely, we do. As I mentioned, transcripts need to be sent in at various times throughout the year. And if there are concerns, then those conversations are had as well.

Yes, the question of tracking students who . . . and where they are going and how well protected they

are. I can't say that there is a level of, quote-unquote, "protection" that the Ministry provides. But obviously, as with any citizens of Bermuda, if they are in a country where there may be unrest, the Government is aware and/or the specific consular areas, consular departments are made aware of young people who may be in those areas. But the Ministry doesn't actively track young people in that regard. As you said, we are in tumultuous times. And so, the Government overall, does provide support for, not just young people, but anyone in areas that may be deemed to be somewhat challenged.

With regard to the work, which I find quite exciting around Hope Academy, the question was around the 36 applicants. So that . . . when we spoke about the 36 applications, it wasn't specifically for students to attend Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy. It's actually around the expression of interest that we had in terms of getting a school transformation team formulated. And so, there were 36 applicants who expressed interest, which . . . and so, yes, your question or the question from Senator Cunningham was with regard to whether parents have been involved. We opened up the expression of interest to the community. So, it could be a parent. It could be somebody with a level of interest who may not . . . who may or may not actually have a child who attends the school. We opened it up because we know that this is a community collaboration. We wanted to ensure that we had a diverse group of people to help transform [Hope Academy]. And so, it wasn't specifically enrolment. It was around the number of people who had expressed interest in transforming that particular school.

The top three grants and scholarships question was with regard to the College Promise. [The sum of] \$450,000 is what we . . . is the amount that is expended specifically for the College Promise for young public school students who would like to attend Bermuda College. The next is the Reading Clinic, which is \$102,000. And then the Sloop Foundation of \$80,000. And I want to say that all of those programmes, as I spoke about earlier, support students at varying levels.

So obviously a College Promise would be once they have finished high school, the Reading Clinic gives interventions and support, particularly for readers and different . . . those who learn differently. And the Sloop Foundation gives that experiential and project-based-type experience for young people. Typically, you will see information or media around the Sloop. And the . . . I typically think it's middle school aged children where they will go and spend some time working and living on the Sloop and having that experience. And so, again, that's an experiential impact with regard to—

The Chairman: Sorry, Senator.
Senator, Minister Caesar—

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Yes.

The Chairman: Senator Wight. I notice you . . .

Sen. John Wight: Can I just ask for information—

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Sure.

Sen. John Wight: —on just one question.

Minister, can you just elaborate a bit on that, the College Promise. I wasn't . . . fully aware of that—

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Oh, I can. Yes.

Sen. John Wight: That is just—

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Okay.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: So, the College Promise Programme is funds that are provided to public school students who would like to attend Bermuda College. For a variety of reasons some students may or may not want to go overseas. But we do have Bermuda College locally. And typically, it can be somewhat . . . It may be cost-prohibitive to some people who want to have tertiary education, pursue additional qualifications in particular fields, or even if they are just not ready to go over overseas to school. Bermuda College is an option for young people, and we want to open up the ability for young people to attend a tertiary level of education. So, we are . . . I've decreased the GPA average from 3.0 to 2.5 because it actually gives more people an opportunity to pursue tertiary education, technical education and/or credentials. Some young people after attending Bermuda College will then have advanced placement if they do decide to go overseas to university. So, it gives . . . it basically . . . we are supporting young people at Bermuda College to pursue tertiary education. That's what that figure is. Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Sure, I'll take it.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Just for Senator Wight's . . . it is only for graduating students of CedarBridge and Berkeley—

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: That's right.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: —that year. So, it's not the whole Bermuda populace.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: No.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: It's only for the graduating class.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Only the graduating class. Thank you for that. I do appreciate that

clarification. So, yes, it's for graduating young people who want tertiary education. Yes.

Okay. Let me go back to [the] questions here. So, we did have a question specifically around the . . . what was formerly known as the Education Reform Unit [ERU]. It is the project arm, the transformation project arm of the Ministry of Education. It existed under a previous governance structure and the shift in focus is from reform to transforming education. And I believe . . . so I'll deal with that question because it was one of the later ones.

Just in terms of the makeup of this team, one would note if they had been following the evolution of the Education Reform Unit, there were consultants on the Island who were assisting with education reform in Bermuda. However, there were 17 work streams of which local educators were made up and were co-leads in leading that reform process. Many of them, now that they have been grounded in the reform and have been able to glean what some of those 17 work streams should encompass, have now been transformed back into the public system and where many of them are actually, as they were teachers, they are taking some of those practices back to the schools in which they originally came from and are implementing some of the changes that had been identified.

What the project arm is still made up of are local educators which would mean that they are now, again, people who are within the school system. There may be a few consultants (I don't have the exact number), but it's mainly made up of educators who continue on this transformation journey, who continue to help us build out what that means, what that looks like, what . . . how we stabilise the system. And so, a part of what stabilisation means is that those individuals who were involved in reform efforts, again, have been returned to the school system so that they can implement the change management and provide that level of guidance within the school system.

Those who remain in the project arm continue to work on those elements which are continuing from an infrastructure standpoint to curriculum building. Those individuals are educators, and they are still working with us as a portion of the project management arm of the Ministry of Education.

There was a question with regard to giving examples of other system jurisdictions and I want to say . . . or jurisdictions that are experiencing change. [What] should be highlighted is that typically . . . or what has happened is that Ministry individuals have attended the Education World Forum, which brings together government leaders from around the world in an education space. And so, you have the ability to glean from worldwide; it's not just one particular area. You make contacts there and also glean what their journeys have been and vice versa.

So, there are seminars, there are conferences, there is networking. So, there is the ability for all to share and understand how we move education

forward, how we get better outcomes. And so, I wouldn't want to focus on or call out one particular jurisdiction at this stage, particularly because, again, this is a meeting of the minds of education leaders. I will say that I did attend another event which was in Barbados and that was around . . . it was called the Caribbean Disability Conference. And it was around inclusion in education, which was quite an eye opener. They have done an excellent job there.

Again, worldwide leaders in education understanding what inclusion really means, what it looks like and, again, sharing of the minds and gleaning what it is that they have done that we may or may not be able to implement here in Bermuda. And so, I think that it's not one jurisdiction, it's looking at what jurisdictions have done and understanding what we can take, what is feasible for Bermuda. Maybe we can do it, but do it in a different fashion.

There was a question around student devices. Anybody who has a child knows that . . . so a device is given to all students. It's one to one and that is the policy around how devices are given to students but as one would know, technology moves like daily, if not, let's say, monthly, in terms of ensuring that devices are up to date, that they are functional, et cetera. And so, the model is that the child will have a device throughout their life but if you think about it, somebody entering, at say, P1, is not necessarily going to have the same device when they are at S4. I certainly hope that we have moved on in terms of the types of devices that they have which is more in keeping up with technology, in other words. And so . . . but that is the model. It is that each child should have a device, a working device which has appropriate controls and security, and then also ensuring that it is repaired and maintained at an appropriate or at appropriate stages throughout the life of the student. So, there will be times when somebody will drop it or that sort of thing. We've all done it, so we won't blame it just on children. We have all done it

In terms of . . . okay, I can give a more specific answer around the makeup of the project team. There are actually five members of the team. One is a consultant. The remainder of those that were, as a part of the ERU, as I said, have moved back to their specific areas within Education taking with them all that they have gleaned and are sharing it with the particular school and/or the whole system, to be quite honest.

With regard to oversight of homeschools, homeschools should . . . and so anybody who is listening that has not should be registering with the Ministry of Education. So yes, it is tracked. That is something that we do monitor. Like I said, if somebody decides (because that is an option), they should be making application to the Ministry of Education indicating that they will be homeschooling their children, et cetera. And we do track that.

I just want to make sure that I've touched most answers that have been provided or missed questions

that have been provided. Oh yes, this is, I wanted to . . . I can't miss this.

There was a question with regard to Sandys Secondary Middle School and its conversion to a senior school. That actually did happen. If anybody did miss it there, we did actually have some press around the fact that it is now one of our senior schools. So, we don't have two anymore. We actually have three official senior schools in Bermuda. And Sandys Secondary, their signature or area of focus is tourism, hospitality and education services. And they are actively . . . they have a cohort of students who have entered that programme and are doing that in earnest.

And the question also was around the furniture expenditure. They actually are doing some great things at Sandys. The space that was the library is actually being renovated into their media and library centre and computer centre. And a part of the funding will actually go to the renovation of that space. As one would know, Sandys Secondary was a senior school in the past. And so, they do have provision of the space in order to retrofit and make sure that the school is moving down the road to give the students what they need in order to pursue the particular signatures that they have. And I think that's a positive. I'm happy to see it. As we know, tourism and hospitality at one point was our bread and butter. And it's good to see that young people are interested and pursuing that as well.

I think that is most of the questions. And just a time check, because I know that we do have another head and it is meaty, so I don't want to—

The Chairman: It is 3:48 [pm] and we have until 5:33 [pm].

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Okay.
So, with that, was there an additional question?

The Chairman: Would any other Senator like to speak to this head?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Sorry?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Four? Four. Oh, yes, we do have four hours.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: [That is] 6:33 pm.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Wishful thinking.
[Laughter]

The Chairman: Would any other Senator like to speak to this head?

No? Senator . . . Okay.
Minister Caesar.

[Inaudible interjections]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: So, I had my one question that you didn't answer about your main priorities as the Minister.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Oh. Yes. My priority as the Minister: high-quality teaching and learning. I want to ensure that what we are doing will give outcomes for all students no matter who they are, no matter how they learn in Bermuda. I think what I always try to indicate is that Bermuda has a comprehensive school system, so no matter what a child turns up at school with, whether they are an academic, whether they love working with their hands, whether they are a kinaesthetic learner, the Bermuda public school system is obligated to ensure that those students become the best versions of themselves. And my priority is ensuring that there is high-quality teaching and learning and robust supports for our young people.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister Caesar.
Would you like to move this head?

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: If you don't mind, I'll do it at the end. I'll just continue with my next. Thank you.

The Chairman: Minister Caesar will now read Head 17, which is the Department of Education.

HEAD 17—DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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

Madam Chairman, I now present the budget for Head 17, the Department of Education, that has the responsibility of educating 3,736 students, as at today. The 2026/27 budget has increased by \$7,816,000 to bring the total allocation to \$156,460,000. This represents a 6 per cent increase to deliver the priorities of stabilisation and educational transformation.

Madam Chairman, as we continue to advance education transformation, we remain committed to ensuring that each and every learner in Bermuda's public schools, regardless of which school they attend, has access to high-quality, culturally relevant, future-focused learning experiences. Our work is anchored in a clear vision. An education system where all young people are educated to personally and professionally compete locally and contribute globally.

Our mission advances our vision and supports system stabilisation, charges us to provide all students with equitable access to holistic, high-quality instruction that empowers them to reach their full potential.

Madam Chairman, our priorities for the 2026/27 academic year reflect both the aspirations of our transformation agenda and the operational realities of our schools. These priorities include strengthening our students' literacy, numeracy, science, and digital literacy skills, monitoring curriculum implementation, enhancing instructional and assessment practises, and embedding social-emotional well-being into the daily life of every school.

We are also focused on targeted student interventions, celebrating staff and student excellence, developing staff and leadership capacity, and improving our protocols, data systems, and progress monitoring processes. Together, these priorities ensure that our work remains focused, accountable, and responsive to the needs of our learners.

Madam Chairman, our overarching activities also advance our vision. We are increasing academic rigour and student engagement through diverse and differentiated curricula. We are ensuring career, college, and workforce readiness by integrating academic and vocational pathways through signature programmes at our senior schools. We are using professional development to strengthen and enhance the quality of teaching and leadership, and to drive sustained improvement in student achievement. We are investing in infrastructure, cleaning equipment, and resources to ensure that students learn in clean, healthy environments. We are strengthening operational systems to enable a high-performing public education system.

Madam Chairman, this budget brief outlines the financial investments needed to support our priorities and to continue building a school system that is inclusive, innovative, empowering, and grounded in the Bermuda context, all with the clear aim of improving student outcomes.

1701, Central Administration

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, 1701, Central Administration is allocated \$11,039,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$2,752,000.

Madam Chairman, within that programme, there is business unit 27000 General Administration, which is allocated \$1,484,000, an increase of \$932,000. The budget for this business unit provides for the procurement of essential educational services, cleaning supplies, and operational materials that support teaching, learning, safety, and school operations.

This allocation ensures that teachers and students have the core materials needed for teaching and learning, that administrative teams have the supplies required for smooth operations, and that custodians

have the materials and equipment necessary to maintain clean and safe school environments.

This funding keeps schools adequately supplied throughout the year, preventing shortages that could disrupt instruction or daily operations.

27001, Office of the Commissioner

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27001, Office of the Commissioner, is allocated \$1,119,000, an increase of \$298,000. The Office of the Commissioner provides strategic leadership, system-wide oversight, and regulatory stewardship to ensure quality teaching, effective school operations, effective department operation, and accountability for student outcomes across Bermuda's public schools. This office drives school improvement, implements transformation initiatives, and monitors performance to strengthen outcomes for all students at the school level and the system level.

Madam Chairman, under the stewardship of the Commissioner of Education, this business unit provides strategic leadership and system-wide oversight to ensure curriculum delivery, quality instruction, and effective school operations across Bermuda's public schools. It ensures regulatory stewardship through policy compliance, adherence to standards, and the application of legal requirements, drives school improvement, and the implementation of transformation initiatives that strengthen instructional quality and organisational effectiveness. It monitors school and system performance to improve outcomes for all students, supports operational planning to enable equitable delivery of education services, and implements strategic initiatives that advance the priorities of the Bermuda public school system.

In 2025, the Office of the Commissioner implemented a new, continuous improvement structure. The school improvement plan structure and school improvement cycle were revised and linked to the principal evaluation system to strengthen coherent, data-driven improvement and instructional focus. The revised school improvement plan and cycle, linked to principal evaluation, established a unified, data-driven approach that sharpens instructional focus and strengthens continuous improvement. Collectively, these initiatives undergird efforts to improve student outcomes. To strengthen these new systems, the Office of the Commissioner championed a criteria-based, structured decision-making framework to improve leadership decisions and consultation. The structured decision-making framework brings greater consistency and alignment to leadership actions, ensuring decisions are strategic, fair, evidence-based, and tied to system priorities.

Additionally, the increased financial investment for 2026/27 will strengthen operational oversight by adding dedicated leadership capacity to manage procurement, budgeting, compliance, and reporting. It will also improve service quality and responsiveness

across schools by ensuring timely administrative support, streamlined workflows, and reduced bottlenecks for principals and instructional teams. Madam Chairman, in 2026/27, priorities will focus on strengthening disciplined delivery and accountability across the system.

Protocols will be delivered to address identified operational gaps and incongruencies, so processes are standardised, outputs are more consistent, and schools receive more predictable support. The Office of the Commissioner will review and revise the department's accountability mechanisms to reinforce clear expectations, consistent monitoring, and aligned reporting structures, building confidence through visible follow-through actions.

27030, Human Resources

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: [Human Resources] is allocated \$672,000, an increase of \$17,000. Madam Chairman, this increase reflects incremental adjustments in compensation levels necessary to sustain reliable administrative services and workflows. This business unit supports continuity of school operations by managing the core administrative processes required to onboard and separate temporary relief and substitute personnel to process travel-related documentation for arriving and departing teachers, maintain accurate records for compliance, and administer the Long Service Awards Programme for eligible employees.

In fiscal year 2025/26, this business unit supported staff morale and organisational stability by holding an awards celebration to recognise employees who had achieved five-year service milestones through a formal Long Service celebration. This recognition strengthened staff members' sense of value and belonging and contributed to a more positive and motivated workplace culture, which supports retention, continuity, and stability across our schools.

Madam Chairman, the principal operational challenge for this unit in 2025/26 were delays with processing the onboarding paperwork for substitute teachers. This was driven by temporary resource challenges and a manual non-streamlined workflow which impacted timelines with deploying substitutes for school coverage needs. A formal workflow review is underway with the objective of digitising and streamlining onboarding and improving overall processing time. I am pleased to report that significant process has been achieved in this area.

Madam Chairman, under the direction of two dedicated resources, it is my pleasure to announce, for the first time, the Department of Education is preparing to implement an online substitute management system to modernise the recruitment and onboarding of substitute teachers. This initiative is critical to student success as substitute teachers play an essential role in ensuring continuity of instruction for our most valuable asset, our students. This system will be delivered through

the PowerSchool Talent Management module, the department's talent recruitment and retention platform that supports every stage of the employee life cycle from hire to retire.

In addition, we will be utilising the SmartFind module, which integrates seamlessly with Talent Management, to provide a modern applicant tracking experience, accelerate hiring and digitise onboarding documentation to streamline routine HR and Talent Management processes. SmartFind will also manage substitute callouts and vacancy matching, enabling us to fill teacher absences more quickly, align qualifications with classroom needs, and improve scheduling through mobile-friendly tools. Further, SmartFind will allow timesheet data to be exported directly for payroll processing, supporting timely payments to our substitute teachers. Implementation of the new online platform will follow a phased approach.

To date, stakeholder meetings have been held, and an implementation team has been established to work with the vendors on the design and development of the system. Our goal is to have the system fully implemented for the 2026/27 academic year, significantly strengthening substitute management across the public school system. A communication plan is being developed to ensure that all stakeholders remain informed as the new system is introduced.

Madam Chairman, in fiscal year 2026/27, the business unit's primary priority is to fill the administrative assistant, secretary, and file clerk posts substantively, ensuring sustainable administrative services and increased efficiency by using digitised systems. This will improve workflow management, accelerate processing of documents and correspondence, and reduce bottlenecks caused by rotating or temporary staff and outdated workflow practices.

27031, Staff Development

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, business unit 27031, Staff Development, is allocated \$913,000, an increase of \$131,000. The budget for business unit 27031 provides funding for a substantive staff development officer, mentor teachers, and the system-wide professional development programme that supports educators across the BPS system.

The post of staff development officer has not been funded since 2022 through 2025. It is expected that the recruitment process that commenced in the late fall of 2025 will conclude soon. The staff development officer, or SDO, is central to strengthening coordination, quality assurance, and alignment of professional learning across the Bermuda public school system. This dedicated role will enable the department to streamline system-wide professional development, ensure consistency across schools, and embed research-based practices that directly support improved teaching and learning. The staff development officer will also expand the department's capacity to design and deliver

high-quality, evidence-informed professional development, resulting in more consistent instructional practices, stronger support for teachers, and improved outcomes for students.

Funding for mentor teacher salaries remains essential to the effective delivery of the Bermuda Teacher Induction Programme, or BTIP. BTIP mentors provide high-quality, personalised professional development and coaching that strengthens the skills, confidence, and retention of new Bermudian teachers through their first and second years in the system. Their support ensures that beginning teachers and second-year teachers develop strong instructional practices, understand system expectations, and contribute positively to school culture. This mentoring work supports stabilisation and complements broader system improvements.

The staff development budget also funds the Professional Learning Programme for educators from preschool through middle school. Ongoing training is aligned with key curriculum and instructional frameworks implemented across early childhood and special education classrooms.

Professional development for primary and middle-level teachers of core subjects (English, mathematics, science, social studies, and modern languages), and encore subjects, which is an education term . . . And for those who don't know, it means "electives," for lack of a better term. And those encore subjects are the arts, physical education, business, and design and technology. It ensures that instruction remains current, standards aligned and responsive to student needs. Targeted, bespoke training for instructional leaders, scaled postholders, and school principals continues to build leadership capacity across the system.

Instructional leaders engage in tailored professional development to strengthen core pedagogical and coaching skills while principals participate in Marzano-aligned professional learning that enhances their ability to lead instructional improvement, use data effectively, and cultivate positive school cultures. These leadership development initiatives help create the conditions for effective teaching, consistent implementation of system priorities, and sustained school improvement.

Madam President [*sic*], I'm just going to wet my throat a bit. Madam Chairman, I should say.

27090, Educational Standards and Accountability

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27090, Educational Standards and Accountability is allocated \$1,112,000, an increase of \$101,000.

Madam Chairman, the Educational Standards and Accountability, or ESA unit, monitors system-wide standards for teaching, learning, and school performance, ensuring every school is working toward meeting those expectations. The unit strengthens principal development by providing coaching and leadership

support that builds strong instructional leaders. It also coordinates professional development so that leaders have the skills, tools, and practices needed to raise student achievement.

During the 2025/26 school year, the acting director for ESA facilitated principals' professional learning sessions on the development and implementation of school improvement plans, or SIPs, including the use of implementation data, progress monitoring data, and the full set of processes and procedures required to execute SIPs competently. Through professional learning, the acting director provided supports to principals to assist them in translating system priorities into daily practice, resulting in more coherent instructional delivery, more responsive student support systems, and measurable gains in student learning across Bermuda's public schools.

For the past three years, the Educational Standards and Accountability unit has been under-resourced. As a result, officers both substantive and acting in the unit [are] being reassigned to support the Project Office, formerly known as the Education Reform Unit, or ERU. Recruitment for those posts has concluded, and for the 2026/27 year the unit will have a substantive director and three substantive assistant directors to execute the full remit.

The unit holds the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating principals' performance throughout the school year, using the 21 leadership responsibilities, evaluating the outcomes of school improvement plans, and ensuring an evidence-based accountability framework is implemented that reinforces continuous improvement across schools.

Madam Chairman, Attendance and Registration Services has been returned to business unit 27090, Educational Standards and Accountability, and no longer under business unit 27095, School Attendance. This team implements systems to ensure children of compulsory school age are enrolled in school and attending daily.

It oversees the annual registration and transfer process, monitors attendance trends across all schools, and supports system-wide efforts to reduce chronic absenteeism through consistent reporting, data audits, and continuous process improvement. It also provides data and recommendations to ministry and department leadership to support decisions on enrolment, placement, and capacity planning. The functions and main activities of this unit include daily attendance monitoring and school support, such as guidance on attendance practices, training for school staff on PowerSchool entries and coding, and daily contact with parents or guardians to confirm unexplained absences and ensure student safety.

This unit also manages the full annual registration process across year levels, including timelines, open house schedules, placement criteria, capacity constraints, award letters, appeals, and transfer processing. In addition, it delivers high-volume data

collection and reporting, including monthly attendance reporting.

In 2025/26, attendance monitoring was strengthened through training and daily parent contact protocols. School administrative assistants received training and attendance officers were included in a multi-tiered system of support (or MTSS) discussions so that students missing 10 per cent or more of school days could be identified earlier and supported more consistently. Looking to 2026/27, priorities are focused on modernising attendance practices and conducting a comprehensive review of the attendance officer role.

27160, Substitutes

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, business unit 27160, Substitutes, is allocated \$5,739,000, an increase of \$1,272,000 . . . I'm sorry, \$1,273,000.

Madam Chairman, this programme ensures uninterrupted learning and stable school operations by deploying trained and qualified Bermuda Educators Council licenced personnel to provide coverage whenever teachers or staff are absent. The additional funding strengthens year-round staffing stability by ensuring allocated substitutes are available daily at every primary, middle, senior and special school. It expands the pool of trained, qualified substitutes, improving the programme's ability to respond quickly to teacher and staff absences. This critical programme safeguards instructional and service time and supports student well-being by maintaining continuity of teaching and learning across all public schools.

1702, Student Services

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, programme 1702, Student Services, is allocated \$21,671,000 for 2026/27. This represents a decrease of \$42,000.

Student Services exists to ensure that every student, regardless of ability, background or need, has equitable access to education and the individualised support required to succeed. This unit is grounded in the understanding that learning is not a one-size-fits-all and students arrive with diverse strengths, challenges and circumstances that require differentiated approaches. Student Services provides specialised expertise and targeted interventions through the multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), process, working with school teams to remove barriers to learning and promote full participation in the educational experience.

Through multidisciplinary collaboration, early identification and evidence-based practices, this unit ensures that students with learning differences, social and emotional needs, or other unique circumstances receive the accommodations, services, and programming essentials for their growth and development.

Ultimately, Student Services exists to uphold equity, inclusion and the rights of every child in the Bermuda public school system to reach their highest potential.

27061, Behaviour Management

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Behaviour Management is allocated \$1,883,000 for 2026/27, an increase of \$49,000. This unit provides targeted behavioural support across the school system.

The education officer supervises educational therapists (or ETs) and educational therapist assistants (ETAs) in implementing individualised classroom management plans (or ICMPs), behaviour intervention support plans (BSIPs), functional behaviour assessments (FBAs), and behaviour intervention plans (or BIPs). The majority of spend for this unit covers salaries.

Educational therapists provide crucial, specialised support for students by bridging the gap between academic instruction and behavioural support. They go beyond traditional tutoring to foster independence, build emotional resilience, develop learning strategies, and improve self-confidence, ensuring students can thrive in the classroom.

1702, Behaviour Management

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: The performance measure for this unit tracks the percentage of students whose behaviour intervention support plans were created with full fidelity. These plans are an essential part of our MTSS, or multi-tiered system of support, ensuring that students with significant behavioural needs receive structured, evidence-based interventions.

Accuracy in this measure is defined by three core elements.

1. Each plan must be built on a completed functional behavioural assessment and include all required components, identified triggers, replacement behaviours, and clear reinforcement strategies.
2. The interventions must occur with frequency prescribed in the plan.
3. The support must be delivered with quality, using the restorative and social-emotional approaches expected across the system.

These ensure the BSIPs are not simply written but are meaningful tools that guide daily practice.

Data for this measure is drawn from PowerSchool, our central student information system, where behaviour intervention support plans and their review timelines are tracked and accuracy is further validated through the MTSS rubrics, school walkthroughs, and behavioural incidence reports. These checks ensure that the plans are not only created correctly but are being implemented as intended.

For the 2024/25 school year, this unit achieved its target of 100 per cent conformity in the creation of

the BISPs. This reflects strong adherence to required processes and a clear commitment to supporting students with the highest behavioural needs.

Achieving this target is significant, as behaviour intervention support plans are not optional supports. They are essential tools that ensure students with the highest behavioural needs receive their entitled interventions. Looking ahead, this unit will build specialist capacity so that staff have the training and tools needed to deliver these plans effectively.

Information about business unit 27062, Success Academy, which is allocated \$28,000, will be provided under business unit 27084, Alternative Education Programme.

27063, School Psychology

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: School Psychology is allocated \$1,335,000, an increase of \$40,000. Funding for this programme supports the work of school psychologists with clinical expertise, as well as the assessment tool and materials required to complete student evaluations.

Madam Chairman, school psychologists provide comprehensive services that promote student success across academic, social, emotional, and behavioural domains. Their work supports schools by consulting with educators and families, conducting psychoeducational assessments, delivering interventions and contributing to initiatives that strengthen student well-being and learning outcomes. The programme operates through both direct support to individual students and to support school teams.

School psychologists also work with teachers, families, and leadership teams to identify learning needs and barriers to success. They participate in school team meetings to discuss academic, behavioural, and social-emotional concerns, recommend evidence-based strategies, and monitor progress before determining whether a formal assessment is required. In addition, school psychologists conduct comprehensive psychoeducational evaluations and provide recommendations that guide interventions. They support mental health and well-being by helping schools strengthen classroom supports and improve school climate, and they contribute to crisis prevention and response so schools can protect student safety and emotional stability during critical incidents.

This programme places emphasis on supporting schools to do the right work before assessment. School psychologists help teams clarify the presenting concern, identify what has already been tried, and recommend practical classroom strategies that can be implemented immediately. This strengthens fairness and consistency, reduces unnecessary referrals, and ensures that when an assessment is required, it is informed by clear evidence of need and a record of interventions and progress monitoring.

In fiscal year 2025/26, all schools had a school psychologist assigned, ensuring access to assessment support and consultation throughout the year, and continuity of services, regardless of school placement or staffing changes. Where urgent demand increased, the team also redeployed capacity to meet those needs. The additional funding provided last year was utilised to secure additional services to support a high volume of assessments where timely psychoeducational evaluations were most urgent, enabling students to receive evaluations and appropriate supports.

In fiscal year 2026/27, the programme's priority is to strengthen capacity to respond to complex mental health and behavioural needs while preserving early intervention and preventative supports. Discussions are underway for hiring a clinical psychologist to support students' mental health challenges and social-emotional adjustment needs. This is intended to improve responses to high-need cases and enable them to sustain both urgent casework and proactive school-wide supports.

For this unit, the performance measures tracked the percentage of psychoeducational assessments completed between April 1, 2025, and January 31, 2026. This performance measure is significant because it tracks the timely completion of psychoeducational assessments, which are essential for identifying learning needs and ensuring students receive the appropriate supports to strengthen academic rigour and engagement.

Further, these assessments help determine whether a student requires specialised interventions, accommodations, or placement within the MTSS framework, making timely completion critical for student progress. This performance measure draws data from the referral log, which records all requests and all of the steps taken to complete psychoeducational assessments.

Between April 2025 and January 26, 2026, Madam Chairman, 24 referrals were assigned and 19 were completed, resulting in a completion rate of 73 per cent. To improve performance, this unit will continue working closely with schools to streamline the assessment process, ensure timely submission of required documentation, and support parents in attending feedback meetings. Strengthening coordination between schools and psychologists will help reduce delays and improve completion rates.

27064, Adapted Physical Education

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Adapted Physical Education is allocated \$346,000, an increase of \$14,000. Madam Chairman, the Adapted Physical Education programme provides developmentally appropriate physical education supports for students with diverse needs. Its purpose is to help students get active and stay active by offering the individualised supports,

modifications, and adaptive strategies needed for meaningful participation in physical education.

Through this programme, students are integrated into the regular physical education curriculum to the greatest extent possible, promoting inclusion, skill development, and improved physical well-being. The programme's functions and main activities focus on adapting and modifying physical activities, so they are accessible and developmentally appropriate for each learner. Adapted lessons are delivered individually or in small groups and within regular physical education settings, depending on the student's level of need and ability to participate.

Students supported through the APE, or Assisted Physical Education programme, present a range of movement challenges from mild to developmental delays to significant physical limitations. So, the level of support is tailored, and APE teachers design and implement modifications aligned with each student's individualised education programme (or IEP) to ensure participation, progress, and safety. This programme is delivered by adapted physical education teachers. These specialist teachers work across Bermuda school zones and provide direct support to students who require adapted instruction, while also advising and coaching school staff to strengthen inclusive participation in physical education.

In 2025/26, one of the programme's most significant achievements was strengthening the partnership with Special Olympics Bermuda and successfully delivering the Adapted Physical Education and Special Olympics National Track and Field Invitational in May 2025. This collaboration expanded opportunities for students with diverse needs to participate in inclusive athletic events, showcase their skills, and engage in meaningful physical activity within a positive, supportive community environment.

This event brought together students from Primary 1 through Senior 4, including students who have transitioned to the K. Margaret Carter Centre, Summerhaven [Residential Home], and other supported community facilities, and it has helped identify and nurture future para-athletes and Special Olympians. I wish we could give a little round of applause right now, because I think that that deserves it, but I'll say it rather than do it.

[Desk thumping]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Thank you.

27065, Hearing

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: The Hearing business unit is allocated \$214,000 for 2026/27, an increase of \$7,000. Madam Chairman, this business unit supports students who are deaf or hard of hearing so that they can fully access instruction and school life.

The purpose of this programme is to remove communication barriers by ensuring students receive specialised services, the right communication supports such as sign language, classroom amplification systems or captioning, and learning materials adapted to their individual hearing profiles, again highlighting inclusive education.

In 2025/26, the programme strengthened staff capacity through professional learning in differentiated instruction through learning styles, MTSS implementation, restorative practices, and Crisis Prevention Institute approaches. These development activities support more consistent, inclusive classroom practice for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and reinforce the skills staff need to respond to learning and behavioural needs in a student-centred manner.

In 2026/27, priorities will focus on strengthening dedicated hearing services by securing protected time for hearing-specific work, enhancing early identification and monitoring through regular checks and classroom observation, and expanding timely access to assistive technologies such as amplification and captioning tools.

27066, Vision

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27066, Vision, is allocated \$119,000 for 2026/27, which is an increase of \$70,000. This business unit supports students who are visually impaired so that they can access learning on equal terms with their peers.

Students receive specialised instruction, books and learning materials in accessible formats, including braille, large print, and digital media, and the equipment and technology needed to participate fully in both core and expanded curricula, again, inclusive education.

The programme's functions and main activities centre on building transferable skills that enable independence and participation. It provides instructional services tailored to each student's visual needs, develops and sources accessible learning materials, supports the use of assistive technology, and emphasises real-life learning that strengthens independence. The programme is also strengthened through partnerships, including Vision Bermuda, which supports post-secondary transitions and planning.

In 2026/27, priorities will focus on strengthening MTSS capability for Vision services so tiered supports are delivered consistently, improving mathematics instruction for using students' learning preferences to increase engagement and confidence, and strengthening reading comprehension through explicit strategies aligned to how students access text, be it braille, large print, audio, or tactile supports.

27069, Gifted and Talented

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27069, Gifted and Talented, is allocated \$131,000, an increase

of \$6,000. The increased funding to this business unit will support innovative learning experiences and resources for students identified as gifted and/or talented. For this year, students have had rigorous culturally relevant STEM learning experiences developed by the staff of Harbour Radio or BIOS [Bermuda Institute of Ocean Sciences].

Students eagerly await the rescheduled launch of *Artemis [II]*, the coastal research vessel. It should be noted that this launch will take place on April 1, next week, at Cooper's Island station, and students will have an opportunity to engage with the guest engineers for a presentation, which is exciting for them.

27071, Office Support

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27061, Office Support, is allocated \$634,000, an increase of \$23,000. Madam Chairman, this business unit supports the administrative backbone of student services so that learning support, school psychology, counselling, behaviour management, and other specialist supports can operate smoothly and consistently. Its purpose is to ensure that essential student support processes such as scheduling, documentation, communication, and records are handled efficiently so specialist staff can focus on providing direct services to students and schools.

Key functions and main activities include administrative coordination for student service programmes, case management support, compliance and recordkeeping, serving as a communication hub for families, schools, and specialists, and operational support that enables programmes to deliver services on time and with the right information available.

In 2026/27, the priority is to reduce communication gaps and strengthen timely information flow across staff, families, and stakeholders. This is intended to support smoother operations and more effective coordination and stronger partnerships that ultimately improve student outcomes.

27072, Counselling

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27072, Counselling, is allocated \$3,432,000, which is an increase of \$231,000. Madam Chairman, this business unit supports a comprehensive counselling programme that strengthens students' academic, social, emotional, and future career success.

Its purpose is to provide a structured developmental system of support grounded in international standards through classroom guidance, individual planning, responsive services, and system coordination aligned to the MTSS programme. The programme consists of activities that include

- delivering classroom guidance lessons that build social-emotional learning, coping skills and college and career readiness;

- supporting individual planning with students and families for goals and transition;
- providing responsive services such as individual and group counselling and crisis response;
- consulting and collaborating with teachers, administrators, parents, and external agencies; and
- maintaining programme coordination and ethical practice through documentation, committee participation, and professional development.

In 2025/26, the programme strengthened cross-government collaboration by partnering with the Department of Health to integrate mental health activities across primary, middle, and senior schools. Evidence of strengthened programming includes the Primary Movie Mental Health Initiative [held] on the 12th of May 2025; the Middle School Mental Health Roadshow and Senior School Youth Mental Health Summit, which was held on the 16th and 17th of October 2025; and finally, Children's Mental Health Awareness Week activities, just held over the week of the 9th through the 15th of February 2026.

There have been many comments around increasing the number of school counsellors to respond to the vast social challenges facing the community outside of the school setting, so I want to provide clarity on the role of a school counsellor versus the role of a social worker.

School counsellors are qualified professionals who provide student supports for academics, social, and emotional needs. They provide a safe, confidential space for emotional support, managing issues like anxiety and minor behavioural challenges through individual or group counselling and collaboration with parents and staff. At the senior level, they also guide academic planning, college preparation, and career development.

Alternatively, social workers prioritise addressing antisocial behaviour, high-risk emotional tendencies, and environmental barriers to learning, often supporting students, families, and specialised needs. This field emphasises case management practices, often connecting multiple agencies outside of education, inclusive of the courts. There is synergy between these two professional fields, and we will continue to explore collaboratively on how we can best meet the needs of students who present with behavioural, social, emotional, and mental health challenges from mild to severe.

Madam Chairman, in order to provide our most at-risk students with the support services they require, the strategy must be intentional, cross-ministry and external partners, for a call to action to support our young people.

In 2026/27, priorities include revising classroom guidance lessons to integrate additional mental health-focused activities that strengthen students' coping skills, resilience, and emotional literacy, and continuing to strengthen partnerships with local mental health providers, including through professional learning days

and sustained collaboration with the Department of Health.

27073, Summer Programme
27074, Learning Support

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27073, the Summer Programme is allocated \$18,000.

Business unit 27074, Learning Support, is allocated \$4,755,000, an increase of \$219,000. This business unit supports specialised learning support and special education services across preschools, primary, middle, and senior schools, as well as at the Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy and within trauma-responsive programmes at the Success Academy. Its purpose is to ensure students with diverse learning needs receive targeted, evidence-based interventions that promote academic growth, independence, and equitable access to the curriculum.

Key functions and main activities include students who require individualised education plans (or IEPs) through assessment, data review, and collaboration with school teams, providing targeted instruction and interventions for students with IEPs to support academic, behavioural, and functional skill development, and managing and coordinating programme services, including compliance, monitoring, documentation, scheduling, and collaboration with schools and families. Funded posts include special education officers and learning support teachers.

In 2025/26, professional development strengthened delivery capacity across the system. Training in differentiated instruction and learning styles strengthened teachers' ability to tailor instruction. MTSS training strengthened consistency and competency in tiered interventions and restorative practices.

In 2026/27, priorities include continuing to strengthen MTSS implementation through ongoing training, coaching, and support across school teams, targeted overseas recruitment to hire learning support teachers with specialised credentials in autism developmental delay and other high-need areas, and a focus on improving reading and mathematics skills through targeted interventions in evidence-based practices and consistent progress monitoring.

27076, Early Childhood Education

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Early Childhood Education is allocated \$137,000, with no change from the 2025/26 year, which reflects a salary and required resources.

27079, Paraprofessionals

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27079, Paraprofessionals, is allocated \$6,857,000, a decrease of \$475,000.

This funding supports paraeducators who provide essential in-class and one-to-one support across the full educational spectrum, including preschools, primary, middle, and senior schools, the Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy, and the Success Academy.

Its purpose is to strengthen equitable access to learning and well-being by reinforcing classwork, supporting IEP goals, promoting independence, and providing physical assistance where required so students can participate safely in school.

Paraprofessionals are responsible for assisting teachers by reinforcing instructional activities, providing one-to-one support for designated students, including academic, behavioural, and functional supports aligned to IEP goals, implementing behaviour plans through prompting and redirection, supporting toileting, mobility, and personal care needs with dignity and safety, and providing vision and hearing support such as adapting materials, scribing, and assisting with access to assistive devices.

In 2025/26, professional development strengthened paraeducator practice. Training in differentiated instruction and learning styles strengthened skills to support diverse learner needs and improve engagement. MTSS training clarified roles and strengthened data-informed tiered interventions.

In 2026, the priority is [to] continue MTSS training so paraeducators have common language and practical tools aligned to tiered intervention expectations.

27083, Autism

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Madam Chairman, business unit 27083, Autism, is allocated \$741,000, a decrease of \$185,000.

Madam Chairman, the Autism programme's core functions are to ensure appropriate placement of documented and eligible students into autism spectrum diagnoses (or ASD) classrooms for the least restrictive environment based on

- individual needs;
- provide specialised instruction using evidence-based practices that support communication;
- social development;
- behaviour regulation;
- academic growth; and
- ensure system-wide supports for students with ASD across primary, middle, senior, and special school settings to promote continuity of service and equitable access to resources.

In 2025/26, there was a notable increase in successful and meaningful inclusion. Students were integrated more regularly from ASD classrooms into general education classrooms with or without additional support. This reflects improved readiness and stronger collaboration between autism programme staff and school teams and reinforces the department's

commitment to meaningful access to the least restrictive environment.

As evidence, approximately 10 children in primary and middle schools are successfully participating in mainstream programmes this year. As a result of students successfully participating in mainstream classes, there wasn't a requirement to fill two posts. As a result, these two posts were not funded. In the event that student numbers increase, staffing levels will also be addressed swiftly and posts funded.

Looking to 2026/27, the priority is to establish an additional autism classroom to accommodate the increasing number of students who may require specialised support entering the system.

27084, Alternative Education

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Under business unit 27084, Alternative Education programme, there's an allocation of \$1,041,000, a 10 per cent decrease of \$112,000. This business unit supports Success Academy and other alternative education provision for students who require a different environment to regulate behaviour and ultimately reintegrate into regular classroom settings. These alternative placements help students reengage with learning and in order to progress towards recognised qualifications.

They also provide personalised and flexible learning experiences, emphasise life skills and practical knowledge, and aim to prepare learners for future opportunities in vocational fields, higher education, or employment while maintaining an appropriate, safe, and inclusive environment. Key functions and main activities include tailoring curriculum and learning plans to individual needs, providing targeted preparation for the general education development exam (or GED) in core subjects, and strengthening life skills such as job readiness, communication, and financial literacy. The programme also promotes community engagement through partnerships and, where feasible, offers flexible scheduling options including evening and online learning to support continued participation.

Alternative Education is designed to focus on re-engagement and hands-on learning to [help] develop students' confidence and see a realistic pathway to transition back to a mainstream setting and complete their educational journey.

In 2025/26, students demonstrated growth by achieving personalised milestones. For some learners, this included earning a general educational development high school equivalency diploma, or GED, or progressing through GED subject areas such as completing three out of four subcategories. These outcomes reflect steady guidance from school counsellors and Alternative Education staff and show that with consistent support and a clear plan, students facing significant barriers can make real progress towards recognised qualifications.

Looking to 2026/27, priorities focus on expanding appropriate equitable access to alternative placements and strengthening safe environments in which alternative learning is delivered. Part of the plan is to explore additional community partners across parishes in order to provide a wider array of alternative experiences for the students in these programmes, recognising that some alternative-eligible students reported reduced ability to travel across the Island due to health and safety concerns.

As at the most recent reporting, the programme supported students at alternative partners including adult education (which were two), TLC at the number 4, and C.A.R.E. Learning 4, and the intent is to broaden this network where appropriate.

The second priority is to strengthen security and create a sensory space to support regulation, well-being, and learning readiness.

1703, Finance and Corporate

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: This programme is allocated \$7,964,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$963,000. This programme supports financial, facility, information technology, compliance, and operational safety and health for the Department of Education and Schools.

27002, Finance and Corporate Services

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27002, Finance and Corporate Schools . . . I'm sorry, Corporate Services. I'm saying schools too many times.

It is allocated \$790,000, a decrease of \$8,000. This business unit supports the Department of Education to operate efficiently, transparently, and sustainably by providing financial stewardship, corporate governance, and essential administrative services. In practical terms, it safeguards public resources and removes operational burdens so that if they would otherwise fall on school leaders, enabling principals and educators to focus on teaching, learning, and student support.

Functions and main activities cover the core finance operations that keep the system running. The team processes the salaries for over 1,000 educators and staff, processes payments to suppliers and vendors, ensures accurate reconciliation of leave entitlements, advises on financial efficiencies, and plays a key role in identifying cost-saving measures.

This unit's work also supports procurement, operational planning, and compliance so that schools and programmes receive the resources and services they need when they need them.

Looking to 2026/27, the business unit will also continue strengthening compliance controls, particularly for school-based processes such as petty cash through training, timely signatory updates, and increased monitoring for higher risk sites, helping to

protect public funds and maintain stable operational support to schools.

27003, Office Accommodation

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Office Accommodation is allocated \$1,044,000, which is an increase of \$9,000. This business unit funds the rent, telephone services, electricity, and cleaning services for the Department of Education office space.

Madam Chairman, the Department of Education previously operated with staff spread across central office and satellite sites, and many offices were placed in schools because of the long-standing space constraints. With the establishment of the new consolidated site, the department can now accommodate the majority of its offices in one location. Centralising officers at a single location has strengthened collaboration, communication, and cross-team coordination, enabling more cohesive planning and more consistent implementation of system-wide priorities.

A unified site is helping to build a stronger organisational structure, which is, in turn, creating more coherent system leadership and more reliable, high-quality support for schools and students. Officers who were previously located in schools due to limited office space have now transitioned to the new site, allowing them to work directly alongside their teams and functional counterparts. As a result, schools have also regained space previously used for central office staff, allowing them to repurpose rooms for teaching, learning, intervention services, or other student-facing programmes.

This strengthens the school environment and expands capacity for student support. Finance and salaries functions remain appropriately housed with Ministry staff to ensure continuity of core administrative services, and IT and facilities are housed in the building formerly housed by the Child Development Programme, or CDP.

27040, Educational Stores

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Educational Stores is allocated \$661,000, an increase of \$105,000. The Stores division serves as a centralised hub for procuring, receiving, safeguarding, and distributing essential materials, supplies, and equipment required for the effective functioning of all public schools. The team ensures that schools are consistently equipped with educational resources, cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, and operational materials needed to support teaching, learning, safety, and daily school operations. The Stores division manages the full procurement cycle, purchasing items in direct response to the documented needs from curriculum officers and school leaders.

It maintains storage facilities and inventory and monitors stock levels to ensure timely replenishment.

In addition to procurement and storage, the Stores division oversees all logistics associated with the movement of goods, including freight and shipping, and customs clearance. This ensures that materials sourced locally and internationally are in compliance with government requirements.

Stores also coordinates the packaging and distribution of school supplies to schools, aligning deliveries with the academic calendar, operational priorities, and emergent needs.

27041, School Transport

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27041, School Transport, is allocated \$557,000, which is an increase of \$49,000. This business unit supports safe, reliable, daily transportation so that students can access specialised and therapeutic programmes without transportation barriers. It provides daily transport for students attending the Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy and for primary school students who participate in programmes at WindReach, ensuring consistent access to educational and therapeutic supports that those programmes provide.

The main functions and activities are operational and safety critical. This includes providing daily transportation on established routes for eligible students, coordinating scheduling, routing, and driver assignments to maintain consistent on-time service and ensuring all routes operate in compliance with the Department of Education safety standards and student support protocols. This service is central to equitable access because without consistent dependable transport, students would miss the specialised supports they require.

27042, Buildings, Grounds, and Equipment

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: This business unit is allocated \$1,908,000, an increase of \$512,000. This unit funds one salary and covers the cost of repairs and maintenance for facilities at all educational and administrative sites that fall under the Department of Education.

This includes preschools, maintained primary and middle schools, Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy, alternative education sites, and the Department of Education. This business unit provides services in concert with external vendors and public works to ensure that public schools operate in safe, healthy, and secure environments. It does so by maintaining buildings, essential equipment, and life safety systems providing custodial care and pest control, conducting health and safety inspections, and supplying manned security where needed.

In 2025/26, three achievements stand out for their impact on students and staff:

1. The installation of non-skid, non-wax vinyl planking in multiple schools providing floor

safety, durability, and cleanliness in high-traffic areas.

2. Targeted work to address indoor quality issues, improved classroom comfort and well-being.
3. The installation of double-glazed polyvinyl chloride, or PVC, windows with insect screens and upgraded frames improved environmental control and comfort at some schools.

In 2026/27, priorities focus on ensuring reliable water and sanitation systems to prevent health risks and avoid school day disruption, modernising ageing infrastructure including electrical systems, HVAC units, and structural components to reduce breakdowns and improve comfort, and strengthening preventative maintenance and health and safety compliance through routine inspections, scheduled servicing, and timely repairs. These priorities protect instructional time and reinforce public confidence that schools are safe, clean, and well-managed.

27050, IT Support

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Moving to business unit 27050. Information Technology Support is allocated \$2,994,000, an increase of \$296,000. Yes, my team's taking care of me. They see I am having a little moment here, so if you just give me two seconds, I appreciate it.

[Pause]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Information Technology Support exists to make sure the Ministry of Education, the Department of Education, and the Bermuda Public School System have the day-to-day technology and support that they need to operate smoothly. In plain terms, this means keeping school systems running, protecting information, supporting staff and students to use digital tools confidently, and ensuring that technology improves teaching and learning rather than disrupting it.

Information Technology Support is responsible for essentials that schools rely on each day: stable internet connections, reliable wireless access in learning spaces, working devices and prompt support when something breaks. The team also sets out common standards and oversees projects and suppliers. It maintains information security and business continuity arrangements so learning can continue and sensitive information remains protected.

In fiscal year 2025/26, the business unit made measurable progress in strengthening communications and connectivity, such as the Bermuda Public School System telephony architecture redesign [which is] transitioning schools to a single centrally managed telephone system hosted within the Department of Education Data Centre to improve reliability and enable enhanced services such as automated school notification.

Piloting Wi-Fi 6 at West Pembroke [School] and Victor Scott Primary [School] improved wireless access by increasing speeds and reliability for day-to-day classroom use. And upgrades at Harrington Sound [Primary], Dalton E. Tucker, Dellwood [Middle School], and St. George's Preparatory [School] to improve the stability and responsiveness of school connections so that essential devices and services work more consistently.

The unit also reports performance measures on reliable school connectivity. For wireless coverage, the baseline and annual target are 90 per cent, and actual performance met the target, where weak signals are reported through the Department of Education IT service desk, additional wiring and access points are installed as needed.

For fibre-optic connectivity, the baseline and annual targets are 100 per cent, and the actual performance met the target across all preschools, primary, and middle school campuses. Internet availability is also tracked, with a baseline and annual target of 100 per cent, and actual performance meeting the expectation for active connectivity. The Department monitors use and undertakes bandwidth upgrades when needed. The unit also tracks minimum connection speed and Wi-Fi availability in key spaces. All campuses are required to maintain a minimum Internet speed of 70 Mbps, with a baseline and annual target of 100 per cent. Actual performance met that target. All campuses are required to maintain full Wi-Fi availability in school libraries, gymnasiums, and computer laboratories with a baseline and annual target of 100 per cent. Actual performance met that target.

In fiscal year 2026/27, priorities focus on better day-to-day use of key systems, stronger security, and ensuring core tools are current and supported.

Madam Chairman, if we now look at page B-140 to discuss Programme 1704, Preschools, this encompasses the total budget for all 10 government preschools. The budget allocation is \$5,808,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$807,000.

Preschools build the foundational developmental and learning skills children need to succeed. Through structured play-based learning guided by the Creative Curriculum, children develop communication, problem-solving, and peer engagement skills in preparation for year 1 at the primary school phase.

Madam Chairman, the programme's principal functions and activities include

- ensuring the delivery of high-quality early education programming across all preschool sites;
- monitoring and supporting curriculum implementation fidelity across preschool and year one programmes;
- coordinating professional development and providing coaching to preschool and year one teachers; and

- managing the SmartTeach assessment system and analysing data to measure child development and learning outcomes.

Some of the additional funding for preschools will allow the department to purchase additional learning materials and expand experiential learning opportunities, including field trips that connect classroom concepts to real-world community settings.

Madam Chairman, in fiscal year 2024/25, we can now confirm that the programme delivered strong early learning outcomes, supporting readiness for the next stage of schooling. The programme also strengthened assessment quality. Of the 52 teachers utilising the Teaching Strategy's Gold Assessment, 85 per cent completed Interrater Reliability Certification [IRR] training, supporting accurate and consistent assessment [practices] across classrooms.

Performance Measures for Preschool Programme 1704. This programme's performance measures provide accountability for foundational learning and whole child development.

Performance Measure 1: Preschool Literacy and Numeracy Achievement. This measure tracks the percentage of preschool students meeting established literacy and numeracy standards using Teaching Strategies, or the Gold programme that I just mentioned. For the 2024/25 baseline, results were 94 per cent for literacy and 93 per cent for numeracy, exceeding the target of 90 per cent by 4 [percentage] and 3 percentage points, respectively.

Performance Measure 2: Preschool Social, Emotional, Physical, and Cognitive Development. This measure tracks the percentage of preschoolers meeting system standards across social, emotional, physical, and cognitive domains using Teaching Strategies' Gold checkpoints. The 2024 baseline indicated 89 per cent achievement across three domains, 1 percentage point below the target of 90 per cent.

Madam Chairman, the planned priorities for fiscal year 2026/27 are focused on sustaining outcomes while strengthening rigour for Primary 1 readiness, protecting daily well-being activities, providing cognitive supports, and social-emotional interventions.

Madam Chairman, Programme 1705, Primary Schools, is allocated \$34,683,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$2,532,000. This allocation supports the operational cost of providing high-quality education across this school level.

The Primary School Performance Measure for Writing assessed the performance of P3 to P6 students achieving a score of 3 or higher on the end-of-year writing assessment. The target was set at 65 per cent. The actual outcome was 41 per cent.

The Primary School Performance Measure for Reading, the percentage of P4 to P6 students who met or who meet the targeted growth, is 33 per cent of students against the target of 65 per cent of students.

The Primary School Mathematics Performance Measure tracked the percentage of P3 through P6

students scoring 3 or higher on summative mathematics assessments, which evaluate mastery of the units taught throughout the year and students' overall conceptual understanding. The target set was 70 per cent, and the actual result was 40 per cent.

The planned priorities for fiscal year 2026/27 are focused on increasing quality instruction and are laser-focused on reading interventions and progress monitoring, such that Primary Schools will deliver increased outcomes that are more in line with targeted expectations.

Programme 1706, Special Schools, is allocated \$1,189,000 for 2026/-27. This represents an increase of \$23,000. This programme and business unit support Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy (DAME), Bermuda's special school for children with severe and profound learning disabilities and complex care needs. DAME provides specialised therapies, individualised instruction, adaptive equipment, and a trained staff team designed for student growth, progress, and well-being.

In 2026/27, priorities focus on stabilising day-to-day service delivery while beginning school transformation work that results in a more modern model of provision for a new facility and modernised programming that better meets students' needs. The programme will strengthen consistent therapist availability through improved scheduling systems, cross-department coordination, and service coverage. It will also enhance transition planning for students moving to sheltered environments or to the next least restrictive environment, deepening collaboration with families and community partners. In parallel and in partnership, the Ministry has initiated, as I have spoken about, work on a Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy transformation team to co-design a new model and plan.

Programme 1707 Middle Schools. This programme is allocated \$13,599,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$31,000.

The allocation for business unit 27590 T.N. Tatem Middle School, is at \$0. And the \$65,000 for business unit 27530, [Clearwater Middle School] is for rent and utilities.

Madam Chairman, the 2024/25 percentage of M1-M3 students scoring 3 or higher on the summative mathematics assessment was 45 per cent against a target of 60 per cent.

Middle School Performance Measure for Reading. The percentage of M1-M3 students who meet targeted growth is 40 per cent of students against a target of 60 per cent. The percentage of M1-M3 students scoring 3 or higher on the summative writing assessment was 55 per cent against a target of 60 per cent.

The percentage of Middle School students passing IGCSE exceeded the average target of 85 per cent, with an 84 per cent pass rate in Mathematics and a 100 per cent pass rate in English. The pass rate for City & Guilds Assessment was 84 per cent against a target of 90 per cent.

Programme 1708 Senior Secondary Schools is allocated \$31,612,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$242,000. This business unit supports Bermuda's public [senior] schools so that students are prepared for life beyond the classroom and become responsible citizens who contribute to the overall development and sustainability of Bermuda.

It funds the delivery of the Bermuda Signature School Diploma and aims to support learning experiences that are academically challenging, culturally enriching, and connected to real-world pathways.

The main functions and activities include preparing students to graduate annually by meeting the graduation requirements established by the Ministry of Education, providing learning experiences that are rewarding, both academically and experientially, and supporting students to grow athletically and culturally through structured programmes and school life activities.

This business unit also works to expand access to advanced and internationally recognised credentials where appropriate, strengthening post-secondary readiness and future opportunity. In 2025/26, senior schools expanded access to advanced and international credentials through a strong Business and Technology Education Council, or BTEC, business delivery that emphasises entrepreneurship, employability, digital fluency, and real-world application. These programmes support students to build practical skills and understand how learning connects to workplace expectations.

The two established senior schools are accredited by the Middle States Association and their accreditation standards of excellence. And I should say that although we do have three senior schools, the newest one, which has just come on board obviously would not be included in that level of accreditation as yet, but we would look to do that in the future.

Looking to 2026/27, priorities focus on improving graduation and post-secondary readiness, supporting student growth and success through expanding programmes that make learning relevant and connected to real-world experiences. And embedding innovation systems aligned to a three-year strategic plan, so performance tracking and accountability structures are strengthened. These priorities are intended to stabilise core delivery, raise achievement, and sustain measurable improvement over time.

Performance Measure 1708 for Senior Secondary Schools and students gaining college acceptance. This measure captures the percentage of graduating students who receive at least one college acceptance, reflecting readiness for post-secondary pathways. It is an outcome measure based on verified acceptance documentation submitted to school counsellors. The target for 2024/25 was 60 per cent, and actual performance reached 66 per cent.

Students passing City & Guilds Assessments, English and Math. This measure reports the

percentage of students passing the City & Guilds English and Math assessments, internationally recognised credentials that validate foundational academic and employability skills. It is an outcome measure based on official City & Guilds examination results. Actual performance for Math was 58 per cent, and English 91 per cent.

Students passing IGCSEs for English, Math, and Science. This measure reports the percentage of students achieving grades A* through G in IGCSE English, Mathematics, and Science. It is an outcome measure based on externally validated Cambridge International results.

The 2024/25 targets were English 60 per cent, Math 50 per cent, and Science 50 per cent. Actual performance results in English were 99 per cent, Math 83 per cent, and Science 85 per cent

S1 to S4 students who meet the target for Reading. The percentage of S1 to S4 students who meet targeted growth is 35 per cent of students against the target of 50 per cent of students.

Students passing Advanced Placement Exams, score of 3 or higher. This measure captures the percentage of students earning a score of 3 or higher on AP examinations, indicating college-level mastery. It is an outcome measure based on official College Board results. The target for 2024/25 was 80 per cent, and actual performance was 71 per cent. The Budget Book states 33 per cent, but the report from the officer actually states that 12 out of 17, or 71 per cent, actually had a score of 3 or higher. So, in other words, in the Budget Book, there is a misprint there.

Students graduating with a Bermuda School Diploma (BSD). This measure reports the percentage of students earning the BSD, reflecting successful completion of graduation requirements. It is an outcome measure based on verified graduation records. The target for 2024/25 was 92 per cent, and actual performance was 97 per cent.

On time graduation rate, the S1 to S4 cohort. This measure captures the percentage of students graduating within four years, reflecting system effectiveness and supporting timely progression. It is an outcome measure based on cohort tracking data. The target for 2024/25 was 85 per cent, and the actual performance was 82 per cent.

Graduates earning an external or internationally recognised credential. This measure reports the percentage of graduates earning at least one external credential, reflecting readiness for postsecondary pathways. It is an outcome measure based on verified credential records. The target for 2024/25 was 90 per cent, and actual performance was 90 per cent, meeting that target.

Students graduating with one or more industry-recognised credentials. This measure captures the percentage of graduates earning at least one industry-recognised credential, reflecting alignment with workforce-readiness priorities. It is an outcome measure based on

verified certification records. The target for 2024/25 was 90 per cent, and actual performance was 50 per cent.

Madam Chairman, I would like to celebrate the accomplishments of 11 public high school students who received their Certificate for Nursing Assistants as part of the Department of Education's dual enrolment programme with the college. And three dual enrolment students graduating from the Bermuda College in May 2025 commencement before actually participating in their high school diploma graduations. Again, deserves a round of applause for these young people.

[Desk thumping]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Programme 1709, Curriculum and Assessment. This particular programme is allocated \$3,325,000 for 2026/27. This represents an increase of \$224,000. The Curriculum and Assessment Division serves as the instructional anchor of the Bermuda Public Schools system, focusing each day on supporting teachers and school leaders to ensure that students experience high-quality, holistic, and equitable teaching and learning experiences.

The unit establishes clear academic expectations by developing curriculum standards, learning progressions, and pacing guides for year 1 through year 13. It provides instructional guidance, evidence-based materials, and professional learning for teachers and instructional leaders, and leads the development and administration of system-wide assessments that measure student learning, monitor progress, and inform timely intervention.

Through collaboration, the sharing of observation feedback, and the provision of school-based support, this division partners with school leaders to strengthen teaching practices across both core and elective subjects. The team also analyses student outcome data to identify gaps, to direct resources where they are most needed, and to drive continuous improvement across our schools.

27020, Assessment and Evaluation

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27020, Assessment and Evaluation, is allocated \$520,000 which is an increase of \$7,000. This business unit supports the administration of external and internal assessments for all school levels, from preschool through senior school, including Cambridge International Exams, City & Guilds, and internationally benchmarked reading assessments.

It also supports everyday classroom assessment so teachers and school leaders have reliable information about student progress, so that learning gaps can be identified early, and instruction and support can be adjusted before students reach critical examination points. In practical terms, the unit sets and coordinates

the annual assessment schedule and ensures that schools receive materials, guidance, and support.

The schedule includes assessment windows in September, including Brigands and Reading Assessments, such as Heggerty [Phonemic Awareness Curriculum] and Gates-MacGinitie (which you will not know anything about unless you are an educator); [in] November, which is IGCSEs; [in] May, Checkpoint and City & Guilds reading assessments; and the IGCSEs or GCSEs in the June period. Coordinating these windows requires clear communication with schools, careful management of registrations, and consistent administration standards.

The business unit is supported by the Senior Education Officer for Assessment, and the Education Officer for Research and Measurement. Together they maintain the assessment calendar, support schools to administer assessments correctly, and help ensure that the results are interpreted and shared appropriately so schools can use them for planning and improvement.

27520 Design, Development, and Implementation

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Business unit 27520 Design, Development, and Implementation is allocated \$2,343,000, which is an increase of \$208,000. This business unit is responsible for the design and development of curricula for the subject areas delivered across the Bermuda Public Schools system. And to build support for schools to ensure learning happens effectively across the system.

It provides consistency and quality control across schools so that expectations are clear and aligned from preschool through senior school. The unit convenes and consults with curriculum development committees on new or revised curricula, and education officers recommend changes to the senior school standing committee and the assistant director of curriculum and assessment based on observations and input from site-based staff.

The team also conducts research on curriculum and assessment practices, manages the design and delivery of system-wide tests based on local curricula, and analyses data from standardised and curriculum-based assessments to guide improvement.

Madam Chairman, day-to-day delivery focuses on implementation support. Education officers provide leadership to instructional teams, advise principals and leaders on effective instructional strategies, establish criteria to evaluate programmes using locally and internationally recognised standards, and recommend modifications to curriculum documents and instructional programmes. They also design and deliver professional development so teachers have the subject expertise and pedagogical skills required for high-quality teaching.

In addition, the unit supports curriculum delivery by helping manage the acquisition, maintenance, distribution, and inventory of instructional materials. It

undertakes monitoring activities, including site visits and structured walkthroughs to reinforce consistency in learning intentions, success criteria, and formative assessment across schools.

Fiscal Year 2025/[26] reports three achievements with system-wide impact. First, the unit supported the modernisation of core curriculum through revised English/language arts, mathematics, and science proficiency scales, including family-friendly versions to help parents understand expectations and support learning at home. The submission reports 100 per cent teacher engagement in targeted professional learning across English/language arts, science, modern and foreign language, and social studies.

Second, the unit expanded holistic and arts education through community-partnered learning. One thousand-plus students participated in Spring into the Arts [Festival], and 100 per cent of primary students participated in field learning through heritage partnerships, such as the National Trust and the St. George's Foundation.

Madam Chairman, third, the unit strengthened targeted human capital and wellness. The submission reports 100 per cent specialist coverage across the four parish primary schools, and the reintroduction of FitnessGram, enabling the collection of student physical health metrics supported by 95 per cent attendance at physical education and health workshops. It also notes a partnership with the Bermuda Diabetic Association to introduce the FitStepPro pedometer programme.

In fiscal year 2026/27, priorities are directed at strengthening teaching quality and system consistency. The first is high-quality, subject-specific professional learning on and outside of professional learning days to strengthen teachers' content, knowledge, and pedagogy. The unit will continue bi-monthly leadership workshops now in their fourth year, addressing collaboration, feedback practices, and data-driven instruction.

The second priority is to transition common assessment to an online format in performance matters to strengthen data analytics and instructional planning to help teachers identify learning gaps and adjust instruction more promptly.

The third priority is staffing sustainability across subject areas to stabilise course availability and reduce workload imbalance. Education officers will participate in and co-lead transformation teams, so curriculum and assessment work align with wider system delivery efforts.

Madam Chairman, I now turn to Business Unit 27524, College and Career Pathways, which is allocated \$462,000, which is an increase of \$9,000. This programme exists to ensure that students at Bermuda's public senior schools graduate with clear, supported routes into post-secondary study, training, and/or employment. It does so by expanding access to college-level learning through dual enrolment at Bermuda College and by providing signature learning pathways

aligned to priority sectors, including business, STEM [careers], hospitality, finance, entrepreneurship, et cetera.

Madam Chairman, the programme's functions centre on connecting the Bermuda public school system graduating requirements with Bermuda College credentials and industry-recognised qualifications. In practice, this means supporting students to earn college credits or credentials while still in school, coordinating academic and timetabling arrangements so that the learning pathway is coherent and achievable, and maintaining working relationships with Bermuda College training providers and employers so that learning experiences reflect real-world expectations.

Madam Chairman, the main activities supported through this business unit include dual enrolment opportunities, which I have spoken about earlier, to a two-year associate degree pathway alongside the Bermuda School Diploma, targeted certifications such as the Nursing Assistant Programme, technical and vocational certifications such as HVAC and other skilled trades-related qualifications, and employability skills and other alternative diploma routes, including the Penn Foster option as a pathway towards college. The programme also supports industry-recognised learning options such as the ACCA pathways, which is an accounting designation, where appropriate, and facilitates the coordination required for students to participate in work-based learning and other signature learning experiences.

Madam Chairman, there are three outcomes from this programme that have the greatest impact on students.

First, the nursing programme is preparing students for entry-level employment upon graduation. The programme reports that, on average, 80 per cent of participating students obtain nursing assistant certifications, providing a concrete credential and practical entry point into the health sector for employment or further training.

Second, the dual-enrolment programme is strengthening readiness for college and employment. Students can graduate with the Bermuda school diploma while also earning additional qualifications such as national high school diplomas and, where applicable, industry certifications. This improves students' confidence and preparedness by ensuring they are familiar with post-secondary expectations before leaving school.

Third, the programme has established relationships with business and industry partners so that students learn directly from employers and gain a clearer understanding of the workplace and tertiary expectations. The programme reports engagement with as many as 21 learning partners, which broadens exposure and strengthens the relevance of the learning pathway.

Moving to Early Childhood Education 1712. This is allocated \$3,028,000 for 2026/27, and it

represents an increase of \$284,000. This programme funds business unit 27175, Child Development Programme and 27700, Afterschool Preschool Care.

Business unit 27175, Child Development, is allocated \$2,906,000 an increase of \$289,000. The Child Development Programme has served Bermuda's community since 1977 and exists to collaborate with and empower families of children from birth to age 5 by providing quality services, support, and guidance that maximise every child's potential.

Madam Chairman, the programme provides both prevention and early intervention services. Preventative services include developmental screenings for children between 18 and 48 months, diagnostic assessments, family counselling, and parent education. Early intervention services include parent education, behaviour intervention, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy, and physiotherapy. Together, these services help identify developmental concerns early, reduce barriers to timely diagnosis, and support families so that children can enter preschool and primary school with the right supports and placements in place.

The programme's functions and main activities fall into two service streams: screening and assessments, and intervention and family support.

Screening and assessment services help families and schools understand children's functioning across key domains and coordinate referrals so that children are assigned to the appropriate services in a timely manner. Intervention and family support services include coordinated early intervention for children with developmental delays, autism, behavioural challenges, and communication needs, as well as support for families of premature infants.

Parent education and support build skills in responsive parenting and positive interaction. A key service is the home visiting programme based on the National ParentChild+ model, which strengthens the parent-child relationship through play and verbal interaction using developmentally appropriate activities. In addition, the Family Counselling Programme provides evidence-based clinical services to parents and adult family members to address challenges such as communication, boundaries, stress, grief, trauma, and co-parenting.

Madam Chairman, the programme's successes in 2025/26 reflect strengthening capacity and safeguarding quality.

First, the Cabinet's approval of a new organisational structure with additional and redefined posts including clinical and developmental psychology, screening leadership, a parent and family education and support coordinator, support therapists such as occupational and speech-language pathologists, and dedicated early intervention case management. These all address long-standing service delivery gaps and is intended to strengthen access to services and reduce

inequity for families who cannot afford private screening and assessment.

Second, the programme maintained its accreditation through recruitment efforts, revision of policies and processes through performance quality improvement, and systemic data collection and reporting.

Third, the programme continued to strengthen leadership capacity and clinical competency through organisational, reorganisation and internal leadership development designed to build resilience and succession planning.

Madam Chairman, in fiscal year 2026/27, the programme's priorities are to implement the new organisational structure to strengthen delivery capacity, reduce delays in screening, assessment, and intervention, and maintain accreditation and quality standards through ongoing performance quality improvement and regular data reporting. The programme will also continue leadership development and staff learning so that service standards are sustained over time. These priorities support early identification and stronger readiness for children entering preschool and primary school while reducing avoidable barriers for families.

Child Development Programme, 1712, Performance Measures.

Performance Measure 1: The percentage of clients assigned to or eligible for early intervention to receive early intervention services.

The early intervention service administered via the [Child Development Programme] (CDP) is fundamentally aligned with the Bermuda Public School System priorities. Specifically, it addresses critical pillars of targeted student interventions and the enhancement of data analytics and reporting. By intervening during the formative years (birth to age 5) we ensure that the Department of Education can identify and mitigate developmental challenges, consider transition supports and placements well before a child enters the primary school system.

This measure tracks the efficacy of the programme in converting referrals into active support. This output measure tracks the proportion of children, both those referred and those deemed eligible, who successfully receive intervention services.

These services are delivered through a tiered framework of support. Direct support—regular sessions focused on goals identified by the family and early intervention specialists. Indirect support—personalised reports based on assessment and observation, consultation, immediate guidance and strategy recommendation for families and nurseries monitoring, which is ongoing oversight of a child's progress following active service.

The performance is calculated by dividing the active caseload, those in receipt of any level of service, by the total number of children referred or assigned to the programme. The annual target is 50 per cent, and the result to date is 68 per cent. The target of 50 per cent was established as a realistic threshold

necessitated by the fact that only one staff member was available to provide service. I am pleased to report that the service achieved a 68 per cent success rate. So, kudos to that particular employee who significantly exceeded the set target.

Risk mitigation includes wait list management to prevent children from falling through the gaps. The department has utilised consultations as a primary mitigation tool, providing families with immediate strategies while they await direct service. There is strategic recruitment, the recruitment of an early intervention supervisor who has been prioritised to provide the necessary clinical leadership and oversight. Staffing expansion, a new early intervention specialist was hired this year. Recruitment is currently underway to fill all remaining specialist vacancies to bring the team back to its full complement.

To ensure the prudent use of public funds and the maintenance of clinical standards, the programme is subject to a rigorous audit framework. There is monthly verification, data logs are checked for accuracy every month, and there are quarterly audits where comprehensive client files are conducted every quarter to ensure compliance with intervention protocols.

Performance Measure 2: Percentage of clients who make progress towards their early intervention goals. This performance measure is a critical indicator of the efficacy of the Child Development Programme. It aligns directly with the Bermuda Public School [System], priority for targeted student interventions, and data-driven reporting. Unlike volume-based metrics, this measure specifically evaluates the quality of outcomes, the percentage of children and families who demonstrate measurable progress towards their individualised early intervention goals. The measure tracks children from birth to age 5 who are enrolled in the programme.

Progress is determined through a multifaceted evaluation process. Again, clinical observations, direct assessment by early intervention specialists, goal attainment, tracking the progress on specific developmental milestones, and parental evaluations, reports and surveys to gauge progress within the home environment. The result is calculated by dividing the number of children and families, achieving their identified goals by the number of children on caseload.

For the current reporting period, the programme set an ambitious target of 75 per cent. The actual result of 72 per cent represents a high standard of clinical delivery, falling only three percentage points short of the target. This achievement is particularly noteworthy given the current human resource constraints within that department.

This service is a matter of social equity. Families who are underinsured or lack the financial means to access private therapeutic services rely exclusively on the Child Development Programme. Without this government-funded intervention, these children probably would face significant developmental

disadvantages before even beginning formal schooling. The primary risk to maintaining and improving the progress rates remains the historical vacancy gap, with certain posts remaining unfilled over a decade.

This creates dual pressure, maintaining high-quality outcomes for those in the programme whilst managing a significant wait list. To address this, the department has initiated

- targeted recruitment—prioritising the early intervention supervisor post to provide essential clinical leadership;
- team expansion—active recruitment of a new early intervention specialist to increase frequency and intensity of the session;
- service mitigation—by providing consultations to wait-listed families to offer immediate strategies and support while they wait; and
- to ensure that progress is recorded accurately and actively—the programme maintains a rigorous audit trail, as I spoke about earlier, and data logs are, again, verified monthly, client files undergo [a] comprehensive audit every quarter, and this ensures that the 72 per cent progress rate is backed by verifiable clinical evidence.

Business Unit 27700 After Preschool Care. It is allocated an amount of \$122,000, which is a decrease of \$5,000.

For Fiscal Year 2026/27, the Ministry of Education Capital Development acquisitions for schools totals \$12,950,000. This significantly increases investment in public school facilities and equipment to support system stabilisation and education transformation across preschools, primary, middle, senior schools, and the Bermuda College.

Capital funding for the 2026/27 school year is directed to four connected outcomes:

1. Safer, more secure schools, with phased safety and security upgrades, including CCTV replacement and targeted fencing repairs with particular attention to middle and senior schools.
2. More reliable school infrastructure, upgrades to building systems, including electrical works needed for dependable daily operations and modern learning environments.
3. Healthier, more comfortable classrooms, which includes improvements that support indoor air quality, cooling, water access, sanitation and hygiene, helping to protect instructional time and well-being.
4. Technology that supports continuity in learning. Stronger IT infrastructure and devices that enable digital learning, assessment, parent communication, and school operations across the system.

The programme combines minor works, safety and compliance, major site works, education reform learning spaces, and capital acquisitions. Minor works

at primary schools address immediate, everyday learning conditions. Examples include bottle filling stations, window replacements, durable flooring upgrades, ADA-compliant playgrounds, so children can learn and play more safely.

Safety, accessibility, and compliance projects include replacement of CCTV, asbestos assessments, and indoor [air] quality testing, and replacement of specialist equipment, such as hoist systems at Dame Marjorie Bean Hope Academy. Major works and renovations are planned for key sites, including CedarBridge Academy, Whitney Institute, The Berkeley Institute, and the Bermuda College to improve safety, functionality, and readiness for teaching and learning.

Improved learning spaces include classroom fit-outs with furniture and fixtures, and related works to support parish primary reform classrooms and phased implementation. Equipment and playground replacements to improve safe play, classroom function, and day-to-day learning. Technology acquisitions to strengthen infrastructure, such as servers, networking, Wi-Fi upgrades, security, two-factor authentication, platforms and licensing, such as Microsoft 365, devices for students and staff, including laptops for high school students, and additional Chromebooks for students and paraeducators if required.

Over time, ageing facilities, deferred maintenance, and uneven learning environments have disrupted teaching and learning. This year's capital programme prioritises high-impact upgrades so that schools feel immediately safer, have more functional classrooms, healthier spaces, and reliable technology. The approach improves the existing school estate, while longer-term facility planning continues, helping ensure the stabilisation is achieved through visible, practical improvements across the system.

Madam Chairman, I now refer to page B-142, the Subjective Analysis of Current Account Estimates for the Department of Education, which show the aggregate of detailed line-item expenditures and year over year variances.

Madam Chairman, salaries increased by \$4,492,000, or 6 per cent, compared to 2025/26, in order to fund the department's staffing and personnel requirements across schools and services. Wages increased by \$1,031,000, or 12 per cent, compared to 2025/26, to fund uplifts for the department's staffing and personnel requirements across schools and services.

Other personnel costs increased by \$21,000, or 4 per cent, compared to 2025/26, to fund the department's staffing and personnel requirements across schools and services. Training increased by \$55,000, or 21 per cent, compared to 2025/26, for professional learning and training.

Repair and maintenance increased by \$661,000 or 32 per cent, compared to 2025/26, in order to support required upkeep of facilities and systems to protect safe and functional learning environments.

Materials and supplies increased by \$459,000, or 23 per cent, compared to 2025/26, in order to support classroom and programme resources required for day-to-day high-quality teaching and learning.

Grants and contributions increased by \$873,000, or 3 per cent, compared to 2025/26, in order to support grants and contributions for schools, including aided schools at the middle and senior school levels and primary school grants.

Overall, current account expenditures increased by \$7,816,000, or 6 per cent, compared to 2025/26, in order to support the department's core educational operating requirements.

Madam Chairman, pages B-143 and B-144 show 1034 full-time equivalent posts for 2026/27, a decrease of 48, compared to 2025/26.

With all of that being said, I have now concluded my presentation on Head 17.

I, Madam Chairman, am making it my mission to transform outcomes for every child, as I said when I started and throughout, by prioritising high-quality instruction and ensuring schools are resourced to meet the needs of students in a comprehensive school system. I lay down the marker today for student-centred change and a commitment to a generation that deserves the best start in life.

I thank all of the teaching staff, the principals, the administrative staff, support services, which includes the Ministry, which includes all of those in the department, the Commissioner and her team, all educational leadership for their continued commitment and belief in the Bermuda public school system.

This concludes my presentation and now open for questions.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister Caesar and congratulations. That was a lot to get through. Well done.

So, for a time check, it is 5:54 pm. We do have until 6:33 pm. Would any . . . Senator Wight.

[Laughter]

Sen. John Wight: Before Senator Cunningham has a chance to ask her litany of questions . . . I will just prioritise and just . . . I am just going to ask one question, but I have a bit of a preamble here, so please bear with me.

A few weeks ago, I was very impressed that [the] Government had displayed publicly the the Cambridge Checkpoint results, which I applaud [the] Government for doing. Because I think few in our community were surprised at the results. But we have to have a baseline of where we are in order to determine what progress we are making, so that was great to see.

When I reviewed Head 17 along with the Budget Statement, I was kind of drawn to one or two pages which I am going to draw you to. Page B-146 is performance measures. The target outcomes, both for the current year and the future year, which I will just

refer to—I think this is very important—for example, reading, which is obviously a very important skill for our students. In primary schools, our P4 to P6 students achieving targeted growth for reading is 65 per cent, which I think everybody would be a little bit concerned at as being a relatively low number for kids that are at quite a young age. And I was sort of taken by the fact that our target outcome for next year is no better. So, it is kind of like status quo. So we are not looking for any improvement in that area.

If I look for the same targeted growth for reading in the middle schools or in secondary schools, again, there is no improvement expected in the forthcoming year. And further to that, if I look at this from the perspective of how well our primary schools [are] preparing students for middle schools, the percentages go down, so from 65 per cent to 60 [per cent]. And then by the time they are in secondary school, they are down to 50 per cent.

So, these kids are at a relative disadvantage compared to where they should be when they are in P4 to P6, but by the time they get to complete secondary school, they are at an even greater disadvantage.

So, I then . . . I will just show one other performance measure, and that is on the following page, the students passing IGCSEs, and the numbers may look impressive or not, but the grades A to G. So I contacted an educator at Warwick Academy where my daughters went to school, and I said, can you give me some perspective on A to G, and the response was, well, A to C is a pretty good pass. You know, for those that are in the sort of D to G, they are sort of—I will put in my own words—behind the eight ball. I mean, that may be a passing grade, but in a competitive world that is not going to prepare the students at a level that they need to achieve their academic goals and then their career goals.

So, I guess my question really is, you know, do we feel as though for \$157.5 million dollars, or whatever we are spending . . . from my perspective and I think so many in our community is we want to see improvement in grades so that our children can meet their own academic achievement objectives and be competitive in the workforce when they get there. And I just do not see . . . I think we are at a pretty low point, and we have been for . . . and for many reasons. I am not pointing fingers. But I am just saying if we are not looking to improve year on year, I just do not see the sort of energy to improve things if our own expectations are sort of status quo.

So, there is a lot there, but that is pretty much my question. Do we really believe that we are achieving the goals that we need to for our young people to enable them to achieve their education and career goals?

So, there is a lot here in this head. But for the interest of time and to allow Senator Cunningham to go through her numerous questions, I will leave my one question at that.

So, thank you, Madam Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Wight.

Minister Caesar, would you like to take all the questions at once? Thank you.

Senator Cunningham.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Thank you, Madam Chairman, and I agree with Senator Wight's comment and I think, you know, given that this is the first year of the new Minister's term, or whatever we want to call it, I think this is quite a good, you know, we can have this as a baseline and hopefully we just go on to improve it.

So, following on from Senator Wight, I think what we are seeing is that primary schools are showing an underperformance, middle schools are showing containment of that, and then senior schools are now showing the consequences. And I just think, I do not even know if these are the right performance measures to show, you know, what is actually going on.

Another thing that I am interested in . . . so I took GCSEs in the UK at age 16, so in level equivalent of S2, and I am aware that some students . . . and we have got it in here, students passing GCSEs in middle school. And so, I am wondering if . . . you know, these results were bad. But am wondering if we are actually setting them up to fail from the start, because they are not doing it in the right year level that their counterparts internationally, let us say, are doing them.

And GCSEs in the UK are the defining thing to be able to leave school at 16. So, if our students are doing them in M3, in middle school, they are two years too young, you know, in some cases potentially three, for taking these international standardised tests. So, I would be interested to know what the commentary is on what year group they take them. And also, whether they actually, if they are outside of the scope of the year, I think you have got to be between 15 and 16, whatever it is, are they even counted internationally? Although having seen, and I did a thing on the grades, I think most of them are counted.

But actually, talking about the grades, and I would assume that the Department of Education would expect for a student to get a GED that they do have math, English to a certain standard. But I look at, and I assume, let us say . . . well this is another place that you cannot see numbers properly, because obviously the academic year and the budget year are not equal.

But also, if we are assuming that GCSEs are not taken in the S4 year, then it is not the graduating year. But, for example, the recent numbers released had 144 students taking Mathematics at Berkeley, 131 taking First Language English, so to me it does not suggest that all students are taking all of these exams anyway. So, I just wonder when we are looking at the percentages, is that just the ones that actually even took the exam?

I will stick on secondary schools, so then on page B-146, we are looking at students gaining college acceptance. Some of the numbers seem to be off from the brief. But what I am seeing is the 70 per cent

original, forecast was 68 per cent revised forecast for last year, 2025/26. This year's target outcome is 70 per cent. Gaining college acceptance, does that include Bermuda College?

Then we have got students passing City & Guilds assessments, again, how many is that?

Then, I was very interested to know, so page B-147, the final two performance measures under the Senior Secondary Schools 1708 business unit. The percentage of graduates earning an external or internationally recognised credential upon graduation was forecast at 90 per cent last year, revised was 82 [per cent] and the target outcome for this year is 90 [per cent].

Then, the final one is students graduating with one or more industry-recognised credential, again, original forecast last year 90 [per cent], the revised was 95 [per cent] and the target outcome this year is 100 [per cent]. My question is, What are the external/internationally recognised credentials? And the 100 per cent of grads with one or more industry-recognised credential, I would like to know what those industry-recognised credentials are. If it is a GCSE, that is fine. But it is just . . . what is an industry-recognised credential and what are external or internationally recognised credentials? Okay, that was my . . . Senior Schools.

The other thing I would be interested to know is when we talk about substitutes and paraprofessionals . . . and the budget speaks to reduced paraprofessionals but increased substitutes. I believe the substitutes are increasing by five full-time equivalents, and the paraprofessionals are going down by 12.

I see the reason for continued or lack of . . . issues in the classroom, you know, when teachers are out. But surely, we should not be trying to sit more on the substitutes, we should be trying to make sure that the teachers are in the classroom.

My question would be, How many schools still have acting principals or acting senior leadership roles? And how many schools have substitutes that have been in the classroom for longer than half a term? Because that suggests . . . sometimes, I get that you have maternity leave, you have different levels of leave, but in my mind a substitute is: I have got to go to a funeral, I have got a doctor's appointment that I cannot move, I am sick, and they are normally short-term contracts rather than long.

Whereas paraprofessionals who I think are adding more value in the classroom with the children that actually need that specialised care is where we should be looking. And that was what was concerning on page B-139 was that the bottom four under 1702 student services are Early Childhood Education, Paraprofessionals, Autism and Alternative Education Programme all seem pretty stagnant, or down. And to me that is where we should almost be focusing to start . . . well, and obviously the alternative, but to start and to help those kinds come along so that everyone can get the same equal opportunity.

What are my other comments?

Oh yes so on the . . . I have to say it was quite an interesting read on all the different business units. But the Buildings, Grounds and Equipment discussed on page B-139, business unit 27042, with a total budgeted estimate this year of \$1.908 million, and it was only in my mind because we had Public Works yesterday. But in my mind Public Works also had school grounds included on it.

And so, I just wondered if there was overlap there or if obviously when we talk about inter-ministerial, inter-department things going on, you know maybe the parks is actually mowing the grounds and doing the vegetation and then the Ministry of Education is ensuring the rest of the things.

I also want to say just a shout out to West Pembroke Primary, my mum went along to (oh okay, Madam Chairman's alum) . . . my mum went along there. They helped some of the children in a class and they were in one of the autism classes and my mum was very impressed with the teaching and the . . . just the children in general. And so she thought enough of it to comment, so I thought well I will pass that on.

Oh, and then another question on educational stores. So, the educational stores . . . and you also talked about general administration being procurement. So, I just wondered how much stuff we are procuring and why we need to have two different units procuring (that is a hard word *procuring*) things? I think the general admin, which was 27000, was for teaching . . . custodians, cleaning materials and what not and the same was mentioned under the educational stores 27040.

Oh, and then another question under Staff Development. So 27031 on page B-139 that is increasing \$782,000 to \$913,000. So, they are charged with professional development for improved teaching and learning. So, I understand that there is a certain amount of professional development that teachers need to have annually, but can they also be put forward for additional training or development by their principals or by someone else? Is it a case of . . . if you are in the private sector and you need to get trained on something a manager will put you forward. So, is there kind of a . . . or is it just everyone does the same training and off they go? Is there any accountability for people getting more training?

And then I will say a final thing, I was very pleased to hear about mental health, and I think mental health underpins an awful lot in our society, and if you get to it, if you start having issues in school, I just think it will continue. And then we see the troubles down the road. So, I was delighted to see a focus on mental health.

The brief mentioned that all schools had school psychologists, with only seven full-time equivalents. I assume they are either part-time or they are attached to schools but not actually there on a full-time basis. But I think we are seeing . . . and if we are saying every child now has a computer, most of them also have

phones. And I know there is a group out there trying to ban social media and things, but from when we were at school (and I did not go to Berkeley). . . but when we were at school, things have changed, and just trying to keep these children as children for as long as possible, I think, is something we need to do.

But the mental health was definitely something I found to be an important and well-acknowledged or well-done addition, so thank you very much. And I think that is it.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Cunningham.
Senator Rogers.

Sen. David Rogers: Thank you again for your report. I just have one question in the interest of time.

So, we are looking at the total Department of Education spending under the Head 17 moved from \$19 million to about \$33 million, that is a 12 per cent increase in two years. The Ministry-wide staff moved from 1,088 to 1,040 FTEs over the same period.

Our official statistics are telling us that total school enrolment is falling steadily for the last decade, 14 [per cent] to 15 per cent in all, and around 25 per cent in the public system over the decade.

Government primary schools have lost more than a quarter of their pupils, middle schools have lost about a third over that 10-year period, even as the department still maintains a wide estate and school structure.

So, what is basically happening is the taxpayers being asked to pay more each year for a smaller student body. So, I did not see that addressed in Head 17, how they plan to address these realities. Are there any right-sizing activities? And that is basically my question.

The Chairman: Thank you, Senator Rogers.

Would any other Senators like to speak to this head?

Thank you, we will await answers from the Minister. Thank you.

[Pause]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: While I wait for more of the questions I would like to at least address the last one that was proposed, Madam Chairman, by Senator Rogers. Because I often think that we tend to look at education as a line item and sort of divisible by the number of students that we have.

I think one thing that we need to consider is, again, as I mentioned previously, that although what we may be spending [as] a total number may increase, we are better informed by what students require, more so than when we talk about “back in the day” in terms of the support services.

We also know that many of our students may require varying types of support. And to look at just raw

numbers I think does not appreciate some of the nuances that students require in terms of us transforming their lives for them to access education and social and emotional well-being.

So, we cannot look at a line item and then just the number of students and then say well we are spending this much on students. I think we need to understand and recognise that one child may be identified in needing more assistive technologies, let us say for instance a child may have a hearing impairment. They may actually need more than one support service in order for them to be able to access education in a robust fashion. In years gone by that student may just not have been able to learn whereas we know how to, and we know that there is more technology and more support service in order for that child in order to access education. And so, I think that understanding that there are varying different services which have varying different costs for the different number of students or the different way students require learning has to be considered.

So, whilst I understand the question, I think it does not actually take into effect that we know [and] are better informed as to what it is that is required in order to provide a wide range and diverse student body. What they need in order to be the best students that they are.

We also will be fiscally responsible. But I think it is imperative that we give all students the best start, as I said at the end, that they can and should deserve to have in order to access education. And I do not think that philosophically that any cost should be spared in order for a child to access learning. And so that is my philosophy and so we are responsible for that.

It is a comprehensive education system. So, a child who is a rocket scientist, and one who may not be and may not be able to access education in the same way, all deserve the same supports and services. And so that is the way that I would answer that question because it is too simple a process to say this is the number, this is how many students, and this is what we are spending.

Do we know what each child requires? Do we know what that looks like? Do we sometimes even have what's required, and sometimes we have to ramp up in order to provide that service for that student. So, it is easy to say that this is the number that we are spending, and this is the number of children. That is just too simplistic a view to look at education.

So, I will just go back to my notes and see where we are in terms of answers for other questions.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister Caesar.

[Pause]

The Chairman: Minister Cunningham *[sic]*.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Senator Cunningham, my apologies. I demoted one person and promoted somebody else. What am I doing? My apologies. It must be dinner time.

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank everyone in the Ministry and Department of Education for their dedication to our students. And I think just to congratulate the students themselves.

Ultimately, there are an awful lot of bright sparks out there who are coming through despite challenges in the system, and I want to congratulate them. So, thank you very much to them all.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Thank you.

So, I will go through the questions now that I have. I do have some answers

The original question, which was reflected by two other Senators in terms of do we feel that the budget and the targets reflect where we want students to be.

The budget definitely invests directly in programmes and initiatives to drive achievement. And so with my brief, I hope that I was able to give some context as to what that means. Because again, sometimes you look at a number, and it does not necessarily tell the full story. So, our focus is on targeted interventions, supports and programmes, et cetera, in order to drive better outcomes for students. That is ultimately what we want. And that is why I use the term “transformation” as opposed to “reform,” because year on year I would anticipate that we would see better outcomes.

As I indicated at the beginning of this school year, there needs to be a level of stability and focus as well on what we need to do. And I think this budget reflects pouring into those areas that will drive transformation and align better goals, such that we can achieve what we want to see. And so yes, the answer is yes, you want to see transformation year over year over year and better outcomes. And I do believe that the budget reflects that we are trying to put the supports and interventions in place so that we can drive those outcomes

Again, I think we have to keep considering that this is a comprehensive school model so oftentimes when you look at averages and numbers, et cetera some outliers are going to cause the numbers maybe not to be as reflective as what one would necessarily want.

So, just in terms of when we are thinking about what we want to achieve, think about the nuances of the presentation that I did give in terms of where we are putting our money so that we can try and get those better outcomes and reach those targets year-on-year. And so, year on year, yes, I would anticipate that our targets would increase absolutely.

So, there was . . . I think I was a little confused about the question just in terms of when children are sitting for GCSEs and IGCSEs. As far as I know, that is

at the S2 level, not at the middle school level. Because I think what Senator Cunningham was alluding to was that students were sitting for GCSEs and IGCSEs in middle school. That is just not happening.

The Chairman: Would you have a point of clarification?

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Please do.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: I was speaking to—

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Which page?

Sen. Victoria Cunningham: Page B-146 under the performance measures of business unit 1707, Middle Schools. And it says students passing IGCSEs English and Math. And also, from experience talking to students who have taken them at middle school level.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Okay, so yes, there may be some that are accelerated, but that is not typical. Most students will be sitting for IGCSEs and GCSEs for the first time in S2. Right? So, there may be some, as you know, gifted and talented students that we try to push along. But that is not the norm in most cases.

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Yes, so yes just confirming that what you are seeing is those who are in an accelerated programme, and that is not typical for most students. Typically, it would be in S2, beginning to take those specific courses, (right?), for those who tend to show proficiency and high ability. There was—

The Chairman: A time check. We have 10 minutes left.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Oh, okay, all right, sorry.

So, the question regarding does gaining college acceptance include Bermuda College? Yes, it does because it is any sort of acceptance, to answer that question.

What are the industry recognised credentials and what are the internationally recognised credentials? So, City & Guilds certificates are industry recognised credentials. And then you have GCSEs, IGCSEs and AP qualifications which are internationally recognised academic credentials.

There was a question around the decrease in paras versus—paraeducators. I will try to use (for the listening public) the full name and not our own internal nomenclature. So paraeducators versus substitutes. And so, what I think we have to understand is the difference between the roles. Substitutes typically need to

be in play based on the fact that people—teachers . . . substantive teachers have absences for varying different reasons. And so we need to have a full complement based on probably past review as to the number of substitutes that we need to be in place.

With paraeducators, however, typically there is a bit more of an acute or urgent need. And so the number as it stands at the beginning of the school year . . . it may be specifically for those that we know that we need at that time. But then we would need to scale up at a time throughout the school year if a need becomes more acute and a student needs that service. So, it is a little difficult to gauge and have paraeducators [at] a full complement at the beginning of the school year because there may be cases or circumstances that would require additional people to be hired throughout the school year. So, that is why you would see the difference there.

But again, we need our substitutes at the beginning of the year because teachers do have the ability (and principals) to have absences, of course, or pre-adaptations for whatever reasons—for sickness, there may be a maternity, there may be a variety of different reasons. And so we would need to make sure that we have the substitutes on hand at the beginning of the school year based on what we've seen in past years.

Let me go to . . . There was a question asked with regard to the difference between Public Works versus our Maintenance and Facilities Department. So, there is a difference. Facilities typically within the Department of Education does maintenance and smaller type jobs. We would rely on Public Works to do more major renovations.

The Department of Education will make sure that we are looking at drinking water dispensers, fire alarm systems, burglar systems, that sort of thing. And the Department of Public Works is our landlord. So, think about it in that terminology. So, you are not going to call your landlord to come and change a light bulb. You would typically get on a stool and do it yourself. So that is sort of the distinction that is made between the two areas. Obviously, there would be some collaboration as to where to go, how to do [it] in some instances, but that is how you can sort of think of how that is administered.

In terms of . . . oh gosh, I am sorry. I am looking at the time. I am trying to figure out what would be some really great responses before I run out of time.

How much time do I have, Madam Chairman?

The Chairman: It is 6:27 pm.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: And I have until what time?

The Chairman: Until 6:33 pm.

[Pause]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Right.

So, there was a question with regard to professional development for our principals. And the [question] was, Can they train up? Absolutely. Any teacher can train up. In fact, I want to highlight the fact that this year I have reinstated the Sabbatical Award for those in education. So, if they are gaining a new skill, we are actually supporting them in doing that because it is only going to support education ultimately.

And I think—

Sen. David Rogers: Point of information. Regarding—

The Chairman: The Minister has to—

Sen. David Rogers: My apologies.

The Chairman: Minister?

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: I only have a few minutes. We can talk about it later.

Sen. David Rogers: During . . . while you are looking, really quickly.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Ok go ahead.

POINT OF INFORMATION

Sen. David Rogers: The average cost per student was \$40,000 this year. Estimated, the year before that was \$37,000. The year before that was \$35,000. And the year before that was estimated \$30,000.

Thank you.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Okay. Yes. Thank you. Appreciated that.

But as I indicated before, I started to add to substantive questions. Doing a straight-line division as to the number per student and the number of students does not speak to or consider the nuances around how students are educated.

Bermuda has a comprehensive education system which has diverse learners, which have diverse needs. One student may cost \$20,000, another maybe \$40,000, maybe \$45,000. So, to look at the number in that fashion is actually very, very . . . it is very simplistic and does not consider some of the nuances that we have to consider as to the supports that are provided.

In addition, the Bermuda public school system provides services whereas, again, with any student that turns up at our door. Whereas other school systems if you are looking at other . . . I am sorry, not other school systems, but other schools in Bermuda, in particular private schools, and looking at the cost, they have the ability to select the students that they provide services to or they do not. And so, I think that has to be considered. It cannot be a simple division exercise when we

look at how much we are spending on all students in the Bermuda public school system.

So, Madam Chairman, I do not want to run out of time. And I know I have some verbiage that I need to give in order to complete this debate.

So, Madam Chairman, I move that Heads 16 and 17 be approved as printed.

The Chairman: Senators, are there any objections?

There are no objections.

Those heads are so moved.

[Motion carried: The Ministry of Education, Heads 16 and 17 were approved and stand part of the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 2026/27.]

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

And as we are at the end of today's substantive budget debate, I move that the Committee rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

Madam Chairman: Yes, thank you.

And I will turn the Chair over (gladly) to Madam President.

[Laughter]

[Motion carried: The Committee of Supply rose and reported progress and asked for leave to sit again.]

Senate resumed at 6:32 pm

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

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR 2026/27

The President: Senators, I would like to thank Vice President John Wight and Senator Tawana Tannock for Chairing the Committee today.

I would also like to thank Junior Minister Fubler for his presentation of his Ministries, and also Minister Crystal Caesar for the presentation of her substantive Ministry, the Ministry of Education.

And finally, I would like to thank all Senators for your work and contributions today.

We will now move on to the last item on our Orders of the day, and that is the third reading of the Municipalities Reform Act 2026, and that's in the name of Senator the Honourable Kim R. Wilkerson, Attorney General, and Minister of Justice.

Minister Wilkerson, it is over to you.

BILL

THIRD READING

MUNICIPALITIES REFORM ACT 2026

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you, Madam President. Pursuant to the [Standing Order] 35, we now move to the third reading of the Municipalities Reform Act 2026, having been objected to at the last day of sitting.

The President: Would any Senator care to speak on the third [reading]?

[Inaudible interjection and crosstalk]

The President: Not to speak, sorry. It is a vote. I am sorry. I will not take us down that road again.

[Laughter]

The President: Is there any objection to the third reading? I am sorry.

Is there an objection to the third reading?
Hearing none . . .

[Inaudible interjections and crosstalk]

The President: Sorry. Back to . . . yes.

There is no objection to the third reading, Minister Wilkerson.

[Inaudible interjections and crosstalk]

The President: There were three objections?

Sorry, I did not see the hands.
Senators, would you indicate?

[Inaudible interjection]

The President: They did not object to the third reading.

An Hon. Member: She objected to it.

The President: There was only one.

[Inaudible interjection and crosstalk]

The President: Senators, just to clarify the confusion, I did ask is there any objection to the third reading? And nobody objected.

[Inaudible interjections]

The President: No, no, Minister Wilkerson would have to—

[Crosstalk]

The President: Minister Wilkerson . . . for clarity, Minister Wilkerson on the passage . . . she presented. Maybe you need to restate it. And then we will—

[Crosstalk]

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you, Madam President. Because Members in the Chamber said they did not hear me, perhaps members of the listening audience did not hear me either.

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?

There are at least four Senators who have objected to the passage of the Bill.

[Crosstalk]

The President: We will now have a division. And the [Deputy] Clerk will record the names.

[Pause]

The Deputy Clerk: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Municipalities Reform Act 2026 do now pass.

If you are in agreement with the passage of the Bill, say aye. If you are opposed, say nay.

DIVISION

[Motion in favour of the passage of the Bill entitled Municipalities Reform Act 2026]

Ayes: 5

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

Nays: 6

Sen. V. Cunningham
Sen. D. Rogers
Sen. T. Smith
Sen. T. Tannock
Sen. J. Wight
Sen. the Hon. J. E. Dillas-Wright

The Deputy Clerk: And with the vote of five ayes to six nays, the motion is defeated.

[Motion defeated by majority on division.]

The President: With that said, the Bill has now passed *[sic]*.

[Inaudible interjection]

The President: The Bill has been defeated.

[Laughter]

The President: Listen, it is a long day, and I am just—

[Laughter]

The President: We are all—

[Laughter]

The President: Yes, it has been a long day; a long two days.

MOTIONS

The President: There are none.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The President: Would any Senator care to speak on either of these?

Yes, I see Senator Dunbar Smith, you have the floor.

Sen. Tarik Smith: Thank you, Madam President. Good evening to our listening audience and my fellow Senate colleagues.

Thanks to Senator Simmons, upstairs, who just now reminded me that I did want to congratulate the Muslim community of Bermuda and Muslims worldwide on this past Friday and Saturday on [the] Island and throughout the world, we celebrate Eid al-Fitr, which commemorates the end of the month of fasting of Ramadan. So, it can be a bit much, and to sit in the Senate last week Wednesday, all day and fasting, my mouth was a bit dry by the time we finished at 7:15 pm.

[Laughter]

Sen. Tarik Smith: So yes, my congrats and wishing the Eid Mubarak to all the Muslims all over the world.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Dunbar-Smith.

Would any other Senator care to speak on the . . . Minister Crystal Caesar, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: Yes, thank you, Madam President. I will be quick. Don't look at me like that, you lot.

The President: Who is looking at you like what?

[Laughter]

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: I felt it.

[Laughter]

The President: I beg your pardon.

Sen. the Hon. Crystal Caesar: No, it is okay. It is alright. All eyes on me. I will be quick, but it will be worth it, guys.

I am just giving congratulations on the second annual Verbal Victory Spelling Bee that I attended. I think it was two weekends ago. And I wanted to say congratulations to the winner, 10-year-old Hunter Pewter from Somersfield Academy. The second-place winner was Eli Oduntan from Saltus Grammar School. The third place would be George Morris from Dellwood Middle School.

There were participants from several different middle school level students. It actually runs from age 9 up to 13. It is nail-biting. I do not know how these children do this. They sit on stage in front of an audience, and they have studied for several months. They come up. I think you all know how a spelling bee works, but I probably would have been out in one of the first or second rounds, to be quite honest. Kudos to them for having the wherewithal, being so studious, and the ability to stand up in front of strangers and execute in this way.

I wanted to also really point out that we often talk about how some of our young males are not doing well, but if you noted, I spoke about the first, and second and third place winners, and they were all males. So, I think that needs to be noted that some of our young people are doing some great and wonderful things.

Thank you to the Verbal Victory Committee for putting it on. And I am really glad to see that it is, and hope that it will continue to be a staple in the academic competitive calendar for the school year. So, congratulations to the winners. Congratulations to the committee, the teachers that prepared them, and to the parents. Thank you.

The President: Thank you.

Would any other Senator care to speak on the motion to adjourn?

[Inaudible interjection]

The President: Oh, congrats! I am rushing everything.

[Laughter]

The President: People had an effect on me today.

Would any other Senator care to speak on the congratulatory and obituary item?

Hearing none, then it is over to you, Minister Wilkerson for adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that the Senate adjourn until tomorrow, March 26.

The President: Thank you.

Would any Senator care to speak on the motion to adjourn?

Hearing none, the Senate stands adjourned until tomorrow. Thank you for your hard work today. And I look forward to seeing you tomorrow.

[At 6:43 pm, the Senate stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Thursday, 26 March 2026]

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