



**2025/26 SESSION**  
of the  
**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**  
**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

**15 MAY 2026**

*(Sitting number 35 of the 2025/2026 Session)*

*(pages 2851-2920)*

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

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15 MAY 2026  
10:05 AM**

*Sitting Number 35 of the 2025/2026 Session*

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

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

**PRAYERS**

*[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Clerk]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Clerk.

*[Crosstalk]*

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

*[Gavel]*

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

**An Hon. Member:** Welcome back.

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

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

**HOUSE VISITOR**

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

*[Desk thumping]*

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

We will start this morning with the confirmation of minutes.

**CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

*[Minutes of 27 March 2026]*

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

There are none.

The Minutes will be confirmed as printed.

*[Minutes of 27 March 2026 confirmed]*

**MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR**

**The Speaker:** There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER  
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

**APOLOGIES**

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

**MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE**

**The Speaker:** There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER  
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

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

Premier.

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

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

Minister.

#### **MOTOR TAXI (TAXI DESPATCHING SERVICE) AMENDMENT REGULATIONS 2026**

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

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

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

#### **MOTOR CAR (RIDESHARING) REGULATIONS 2026**

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

### **PETITIONS**

**The Speaker:** There are none.

### **STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS**

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

The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier, would you like to present your Statement?

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

### **CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM, CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED PROCESS FOR**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Premier.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

**BERMUDA'S FISCAL PROGRESS, INDEPENDENT RATING AGENCIES CONFIRM**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** I remember that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection and laughter]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Premier.

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

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

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

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

## CITY OF HAMILTON GROUND FLOOR USE AND VACANCY SURVEY 2025

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

### GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

#### **NATIONAL ELECTRICITY SECTOR POLICY, UPDATE ON CONSULTATIVE DRAFT**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, would you like to proceed?

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead, Minister.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

reform and the integration of the national housing registry framework.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister.

*[Crosstalk]*

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

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

### MEDICAL CANNABIS FRAMEWORK

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister.

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

## RIDESHARING IN BERMUDA—IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister, would you like to proceed?

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

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

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

## **BERMUDA DAY 2026: ANNOUNCEMENT OF GRAND MARSHALS**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Good morning.

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

#### **NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY WORKS ACROSS THE ISLAND, UPDATE**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We are making progress.

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Yes.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Minister. Members, that brings us to a close of the Statements for this morning. We will now move on to the next item on the Order Paper.

## REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

### HOUSE VISITOR

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

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Good. All right.

### APOLOGIES

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

We will now move on.

## QUESTION PERIOD

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

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

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

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

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

### QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

MP Tucker, have you received your written responses?

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

### QUESTIONS ANSWERED IN WRITING

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

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

Would you like to put your question?

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

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

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

**The Speaker:** Yes.

#### QUESTION 1: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Okay.  
You have a supplementary?

#### SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplementary?

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

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Supplementary?

#### SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Hear, hear!

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

**The Speaker:** In the future can he provide—

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

**The Speaker:** —some future information. Okay.

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

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

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Yes, yes.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

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

## QUESTION 2: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDEREMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

*[General uproar]*

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** Point of order.

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Not for youth.

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** —across any region.

**An Hon. Member:** Survey says?

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

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

#### SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

#### POINT OF ORDER

*[Imputing improper motive and Misleading]*

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** —who has practiced professionally—

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

**The Speaker:** We will take your point of order.

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

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

#### POINT OF ORDER

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Come on now.

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

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

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are not actually about the report. My questions are about the reasons which the Minister was unable to answer.

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

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

#### POINT OF ORDER

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

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Sit down.

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Speaker:** No, no. No, no.

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

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

**Some Hon. Members:** Whoa! Whoa!

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

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

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Sorry?

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

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

**The Speaker:** I said I will address it.

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

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Factually to the report.

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

**The Speaker:** But, but—

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

**An Hon. Member:** Whoa!

**The Speaker:** I am doing it.

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

My suggestion at this point would be—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

Now, do you still have a second question?

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** Second supplementary.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Is it factually related to the report?

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

**The Speaker:** Okay.

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** Thank you.

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Okay.

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

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

**The Speaker:** That would be helpful.

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** Yes.

*[Laughter]*

### **QUESTION 3: LABOUR FORCE SURVEY, REASONS UNDEREMPLOYMENT RATE INCREASED**

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

When the—

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

**The Speaker:** He, he—

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

**An Hon. Member:** Cherry-picking.

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Just the facts.

**The Speaker:** MP—

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

**The Speaker:** Put your supplementary.

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

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** Put your supplementary.

**Dr. Douglas DeCouto:** I note that—

**The Speaker:** Put your supplementary now.

### SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Supplementary? None.

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

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

MP.

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

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**Mr. Dwayne Robinson:** Oh!

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

*[Laughter]*

### QUESTION 1: ELECTORAL REFORM WORKING GROUP UPDATE

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Supplementary?

**Mr. Dwayne Robinson:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

### SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Second supplementary?

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

**Ms. Lovitta F. Foggio:** Answer.

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

[Laughter]

**Mr. Dwayne Robinson:** First day back.

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

what then happens to the progress date of September 2026?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** All right.

Those are your two supplementary questions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

### SUPPLEMENTARY

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Minister.

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Second supplementary? No. Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** —or a statement.

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

### SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Okay.

Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Second supplementary?

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

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

**The Speaker:** Security.

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

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. All right.

That brings us to a conclusion of the question there.

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

### QUESTION 1: PENHURST PARK HORTICULTURE REMOVAL

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

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Supplementary?

### SUPPLEMENTARIES

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Speaker:** What is the question there?

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Okay.  
Second supplementary?

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

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

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

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** Okay. Thank you.

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

### QUESTION 2: MARINE POLLUTION COMPLAINTS

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

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Supplementary?

**Ms. Linda Smith:** No, thank you.

**The Speaker:** Okay, thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Premier.

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

The Honourable Member was the leader—

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

**Hon. E. David Burt:** I will.

**The Speaker:** Rise above—

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

**The Speaker:** Supplementary? Supplementary?

**An Hon. Member:** Come on, man.

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

*[Crosstalk]*

**The Speaker:** Next question.

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

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

**The Speaker:** Premier.

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

**The Speaker:** Mm-hmm.  
Supplementary?

**An Hon. Member:** Now we are moody.

*[Laughter]*

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

**The Speaker:** Go ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Laughter]*

**An Hon. Member:** Seriously?

**Another Hon. Member:** Oh, my goodness.

**The Speaker:** Premier.

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** You should know better about—

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

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

**POINT OF ORDER**  
*[Imputing improper motive]*

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

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

**The Speaker:** Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait—

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

**The Speaker:** Take a seat.

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

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

**Hon. E. David Burt:** This continues.

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Okay. Can you put your supplementary?

**SUPPLEMENTARY**

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Vance Campbell:** Well, if—

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

The reality is—

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

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

**POINT OF ORDER**  
*[Imputing improper motive]*

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

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

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

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

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

Now, you want to respond to the . . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**An Hon. Member:** Standing Orders.

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

**The Speaker:** Speak to me.

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Go ahead. Speak to me.

**Hon. E. David Burt:** I will wait.

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

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

**The Speaker:** I know you can speak to me.

**Several Hon. Members:** Aw.

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

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

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** I am listening.

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

*[General uproar]*

**Hon. E. David Burt:** He is trying!

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

**The Speaker:** All right.

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

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

**The Speaker:** Any supplementary?

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

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

**Mr. Vance Campbell:** No question.

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

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

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

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

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

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

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** Keep your shoes on.

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

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

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

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

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

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Yes, yes.

**The Speaker:** Is it in Planning Department?

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

**The Speaker:** In his remit?

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Is it in Planning's remit?

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

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

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

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Okay.

**The Speaker:** Okay.

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

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

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** You are fine?

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

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

MP Tucker.

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Supplementary?

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Minister.

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

**The Speaker:** Supplementary?

[No Audio]

### QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

### QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL, LAUNCH OF

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

Third question.

**QUESTION 3: GOVERNMENT'S NEW PORTAL,  
LAUNCH OF**

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

**Mr. Dwayne Robinson:** Second question.

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

**Mr. Dwayne Robinson:** Supplemental.

**SUPPLEMENTARY**

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

### QUESTION 1: MEDICAL CANNABIS FRAMEWORK

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** He said declare your interest.

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Declare my interest?

*[Laughter]*

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

*[Laughter and inaudible interjections]*

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Whoo!

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

*[Laughter]*

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

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

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

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

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Dr. DeCouto.

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Dr. DeCouto—

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

**An Hon. Member:** Natural doctors.

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

*[Timer chimes]*

**Hon. L. Craig Cannonier:** Time?

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

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

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

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

Any objections? No.  
Premier.

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you

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

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

*[Gavel]*

**Proceedings suspended at 12:28 pm**

**Proceedings resumed at 2:08 pm**

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

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

*[Gavel]*

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

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

## CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

**The Speaker:** Does any Member wish . . .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Timer chimes]*

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

MP Lister.

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

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

*[Laughter]*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Desk thumping]*

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

MP Richardson.

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

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Is there any other Member . . . Minister Rabain.

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

**The Speaker:** Oh, yes.

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

MP Pearman, would you like your three minutes?

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

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon.

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP King. You are a little slow there.

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

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, MP.

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

**Hon. Alexa Lightbourne:** Good morning.

**The Speaker:** Yes, all right.

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

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

*[Laughter]*

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Minister Weeks, you have your three minutes.

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

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

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** —and—

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

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

**An Hon. Member:** She is a gem.

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

**An Hon. Member:** All right!

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

*[Laughter]*

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

*[Laughter]*

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

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

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

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

**The Speaker:** The right ball. Right ball.

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

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** He knew how to get you.

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

[Laughter]

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

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

[Inaudible interjection]

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

[Laughter]

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Yes.

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

[Inaudible interjection]

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

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

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

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

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

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

*[Timer chimes]*

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

**The Speaker:** Yes, sir.

**Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell:** Wow. Okay.

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

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**The Speaker:** MP Tucker, you have the floor.

**Ms. Robin Tucker:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.  
First of all, I just would like to say I attended the SailGP event on Sunday, and I thought it was absolutely fantastic. So—

*[Desk thumping]*

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**Ms. Robin Tucker:** So—

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Ms. Robin Tucker:** —Okay.

*[Laughter]*

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

**The Speaker:** All right.

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

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

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

Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

MP DeCouto, would you like your three minutes?

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

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

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

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
MP Linda Smith.

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Associate the House.

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Does any other . . . MP Dill.

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

**The Speaker:** [INAUDIBLE]

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

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

*[Inaudible interjections]*

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

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

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

*[Timer chimes]*

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

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

MP Simmons.

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**The Speaker:** Very good timing. Look at that!

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

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

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

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Mr. Simmons.

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

Premier.

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

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

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

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

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

**The Speaker:** Hmm. I didn't know.

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

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

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

*[Laughter]*

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

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

*[Timer chimes]*

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

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

**An Hon. Member:** Oh, no.

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

Moving on.

## MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

**The Speaker:** There are none.

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

**The Speaker:** There are none.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

## GOVERNMENT BILLS

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

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

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

*[Crosstalk]*

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

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

## BILL

### FIRST READING

#### PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

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

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

## NOTICE OF MOTIONS

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

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

## TAKE NOTE MOTION

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

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

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

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

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

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

Minister.

## BILL

### SECOND READING

#### SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Smith, Linda Smith.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

marine environment and the marine environment globally and generally.

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Swan.

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

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

MP Pearman.

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

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

*[Inaudible interjection]*

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

*[Laughter]*

**Mr. Scott Pearman:** My mistake. It is like MP Robinson; I do not know if it is morning or afternoon. Well, there we go. I apologise.

Mr. Speaker, I will not be long, but I do commend the Minister for the Bill.

Mr. Speaker, the world is changing, and it could perhaps be said that we are all environmentalists today. That may not have been the case at some point in time, although it has always been something close to my heart for a long time. But we are all environmentalists today, and certainly on an Island such as ours, which is so unique and so specific and so small. And as MP Rabain just mentioned, Minister Rabain, rather, we are directly impacted on this, even though, as MP Smith noted, we are not the ones contributing to this. We are just the victims of all that gets dumped in the ocean and winds up on our shores.

And whilst it is true that this legislation is not going to make a big impact in terms of our output, it is hopefully a clarion call that we are joining other nations in the world that have taken steps to do this.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Scott Pearman:** And I will not make that comment. I will leave that for the Minister to say when he gets on his feet, but indeed so.

And as the Minister noted in his Statement to the House back on the 27th of March of this year, this is something that the OBA, the One Bermuda Alliance, has long been in support of.

The Minister said that what he is trying to achieve, and what this Government is trying to achieve, is not a sudden or disruptive change, but a gradual change. And we certainly agree with that, not just in this particular Bill, but generally people are more willing to accept gradual change and incremental change.

And I declare an interest because we did produce a Bill and submit it to the Government as part of the consultation process in 2021. And our Bill, too, had this same mechanism, the idea being the gradual reduction and eventual elimination of single-use plastics, or at least those single-use plastics that are harmful. And so, I hope it is not overly cheeky to say I am glad to see that phased approach being maintained in the Government Bill.

As to the empty Schedule, the Minister himself rightly recognised that there are some who might say it lacks substance. Certainly, as we stand here today, I think that that is a fair criticism. It does lack substance, but what the Minister said, and I heard him and I listened, is that it will soon be filled. And we take that assertion at face value. For my part, I would have liked to have perhaps seen certain things like plastic straws

and plastic bags in that Schedule now because they are completely unnecessary, of no benefit to our Island, easily removable, and quite clearly there are viable and cost-effective alternatives. So, the sooner you populate Schedule 1, Minister, you have my support and blessing in that regard. But I am grateful to see that the framework is now in place. As the Honourable Shadow Minister said, we support the Bill.

I do have a few points in the Bill, about the Bill itself, that I will address in Committee, but they are just minor points that do not otherwise detract from Bermuda as a whole taking a great leap forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, MP.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Minister.

**Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thank all of the commenters who have gone before me.

Mr. Speaker, every journey starts with the first step. And so, when I look at this legislation, I do not see it as one that is just banning plastic. It is about helping Bermuda understand and transition to a more modern, a more responsible and sustainable future. This Bill creates a structured framework to help Bermuda transition away from single-use plastics. This transition, as has been articulated and supported by the Opposition, will be done in a measurable and practical way. It ensures that an adequate amount of consultation with business, environmental groups, and the wider public must be done before any changes are implemented.

This legislation, Mr. Speaker, also acknowledges that this has to be a workable and sustainable solution. It cannot work if it is just forced down people's throats. This is why this Bill goes so far to talk about how consultation will take place, transitional periods, consideration of viable alternatives, and mechanisms for appeal and review. This is how solid pieces of legislation and change can be achieved, Mr. Speaker.

As a small island in the middle of the sea, we experience the impacts, and I thank MP Pearman for mentioning that. It happens everywhere else, but it ends up here. We experience the impacts of waste, marine pollution, and climate pressures probably a little more than other countries would that do not sit in the middle of the ocean, and all this stuff just washes to us. So, this legislation puts us alongside other jurisdictions in the world that are looking to create that difference, to be that beacon of light that says we will be part of helping to preserve our earth for future generations.

This legislation also forces us to think about how these materials that we are talking about are used, how they are produced, and the impact that they will eventually have on the environment if not disposed of properly or eliminated altogether.

As spoken by the Minister responsible, Mr. Speaker, around the world we are seeing rapid growth in alternative materials to plastic. We are seeing sustainable packaging. For any of us who have ordered from Amazon, we will see it now asks if you want the original packaging or if you want additional packaging wrapped around your products, and people are being much more cognisant of giving you those options.

So, we can see where this legislation cannot only foster a better understanding of conservation for our country, but it does have an economic value as well in causing people to think differently from an economic standpoint. And it also can encourage some entrepreneurs out there who may find some products that no one would even think about.

And I want to thank the Minister because I was surprised to hear about the duty-free option because I know this is something . . . and this really speaks to the ability to discuss because I know this was discussed in another place, and one of the suggestions from that discussion was: Why not offer duty-free for persons trying to import these alternative products?

So, Mr. Speaker, Bermuda can be, as small as we are, a global leader. We can lead the way. I have not had an opportunity to look at what our sister islands to our south are doing in this area, but I can probably make a good assumption that we would be leading the way in moving towards this if not joining some of them that may already be there. I know the technical officers here will be able to advise the Minister of who is doing it.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill allows for our country to adapt over time, evolve based on evidence, based on consultation, and based on availability of practical alternatives. So rather than relying on a fixed list . . . And I fully understand what MP Pearman was talking about because I am right there. Why not have straws on there because there are already alternatives that people are using? So, to say that we are going to have consultation about straws kind of . . . But I get the point about having this consultation. If you are going to do it with one, let's do it with all to ensure that this process is just fair across the board.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I sum this up, this is an example of a responsive Government. We are setting clear policy direction while allowing for flexibility, evidence, and public engagement. It is these careful, thoughtful views that will lead and shape the implementation of this legislation. Bermuda will be better off, and we will be a leader in this area, Mr. Speaker. And I am excited to see that this is something that we all in this House are willing to rally around and make our little Island in the middle of the Atlantic more sustainable for the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution?

Minister of Home Affairs.

**Hon. Alexa Lightbourne:** Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

I too rise having heard the discourse this afternoon and the discussion in support of this single-use plastics Bill. And I do so from the perspective of, as an extension of the Ministry of Home Affairs work from affordability because we do recognise that change behaviours and consciousness regarding plastic and plastic use actually is another portion of the supply chain. When we talk about energy and electricity, the statistics show that roughly 99 per cent of global plastics are actually manufactured from fossil fuel. And so, the impact that it has on the cost of living, the cost of production . . . And though, [as] has been already contributed in this House today, Bermuda's total output is nominal when you think about the Paris Agreement and these other progressive targets around contribution and sustainability . . . But rather the ability to shift through the implementation of this Bill, conscious [of] patterns and behaviours that also contribute to the wider cost of living and cost of production.

I also note, you know, the energy that contributes to both fertilisation, farm machinery, processing, packaging, as well as shipping all adding to that final supply chain cost. And we talk about affordability, reducing demand, reducing oil consumption, and also creating cleaner and more environmentally friendly communities.

I know that my colleague did note too some of the regional integration of these exact same policy principles. And so I am pleased also as the Minister responsible for CARICOM to note that Antigua and Jamaica alongside Barbados and Trinidad, Dominica, and The Bahamas have all made similar steps towards implementing single-use plastics bans and transition away from this use, both at the business level, commercial level, as well as the residential level. And so, I see us as joining a policy and implementing a law and policy that is aligned to what we see other countries doing. And I think that it is a good step.

I acknowledge the Minister's phased approach and the intention to conduct consultation and essentially walk in step with the industry to ensure that things are comfortable both for them and also ultimately ensuring that the production and the pollution is decreased. But I am most thankful for the shift away from the bag use and the things that would oftentimes be so easy to use and easy to also reuse if we are able to get these sorts of items.

The duty relief is something that is also noteworthy. And I think from an overall affordability perspective, this Bill is a good one, and I do support it, both from a Home Affairs perspective to include alignment with our Caribbean brothers and sisters and their legislation and legislative efforts, as well as the total cost of living and affordability in Bermuda.

Thank you.

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

Does any other Member wish to make a contribution at this time? None other?

Minister of [Public] Works [and Environment], would you like to make your comment and then lead us into Committee?

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Sure. I shall, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

So first [I] wanted to just simply acknowledge and thank all of my colleagues and Members for their contribution to what I believe is a significant step in the right direction for the country.

If I can have a few moments to address some of the questions that were raised, one of them was in reference to what other priority items can be undertaken to support the marine environment. And so, the Ministry understands the value of creating marine protected areas that protect the entire ecosystem in order to ensure the marine environment has greater resilience to the many impacts of climate change and potential pollution events.

Other measures include enforcing the statutes associated with chemical pollution to the marine environment, such as the recent amendments that were made to the Water Resources Act 1975. DENR also has the responsibility of maintaining the equipment, training, and exercises of the National Oil Spill Contingency Plan, noting that the shipping that passes from the Gulf of Mexico to Europe creates extremely busy shipping lanes near Bermuda. Maintaining this marine response contingency is therefore very important. This responsibility and equipment is also used to respond to local spills, a responsibility that DENR shares with [the Department of] Marine and Ports and the Royal Bermuda Regiment Coast Guard.

In relation to [the question] *Are there options for recycling plastic on the Island?* currently waste plastic is disposed to the Waste-to-Energy Facility at Tynes Bay that is used to convert heat energy into electrical energy that is used initially by the Tynes Bay facility and also the adjacent potable water reverse osmosis plant before any excess electricity is sent to BELCO. Therefore, treatment of plastic in this way is to some degree a mechanism of recycling said plastic.

What happens if businesses cannot use all inventory within the six-month period? So, the process from the start of the consultation to the end of the transition period amounts to over a 12-month period. So, it would be recommended that the importers adjust their importation amounts at the same time to ensure that they are not holding large amounts of stock. DENR will consult with the commercial businesses on this matter, but in accordance with the proposed Bill, any inventory left after this period will need to be disposed.

And finally, what is the definition of "cost-effective" in this context? And so, for alternatives to single-use plastics to be considered as cost-effective, these discussions . . . or discussions will be had with the

Customs Department to consider reducing the duty on such alternatives to ensure that any cost increase associated with the alternatives is reasonable compared to the proposed prohibited single-use plastic. *Reasonable*, of course, is subjective, but the Government understands to focus on those alternatives that are the cheapest for all.

And so again, I believe those are all the questions that were asked, but I do appreciate the comments that were contributed. As I said earlier, I will not be naïve to think all things, but I would like to think that matters concerning the environment, most things, can receive bipartisan support.

And so, I thank Members. And so, with that—

**The Speaker:** Would you like to take it to Committee now?

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Yes. And so, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be committed.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

MP Famous, would you take the Chair, take us to the Committee?

### House in Committee at 3:30 pm

*[Mr. Christopher Famous, Chairman]*

## COMMITTEE ON BILL

### SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

**The Chairman:** Good afternoon, Members, and good afternoon to the listening public.

Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Single-Use Plastics Act 2026](#). I call on the Minister in charge to proceed.

Minister, you have the floor.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, at your pleasure, I move that clauses 1 through 10—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Pardon?

I move that all clauses—

*[Crosstalk]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** I move all the clauses. Sorry.

**The Chairman:** Any Members have any objection to it?

No objections.

Minister, you have the floor.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

**The Chairman:** All right.

*[Crosstalk]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Oh.

One second, Mr. Chairman.

*[Pause]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Thank you. Bipartisanship.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** I move . . . clause 1 provides the citation for the Bill.

Clause 2 provides the interpretation of terms used in the Bill.

Clause 3 provides that this Bill provides for the prohibition of single-use plastics that are listed in Schedule 1. Clause 3 also provides the single-use plastics that the Bill will not apply to, including single-use plastics that are supplied or used for medical, health, or personal hygiene purposes and single-use plastics that are manufactured from approved biogenic materials.

Clause 4 provides for the functions of the director.

Clause 5 provides that the Minister may make a prohibition order declaring which single-use plastics are prohibited from import, sale, or offer to sell, supply or offer to supply, or possession for supply or sale. Clause 5 also provides for the reassessment of the list of prohibited single-use plastics and the amendment to the prohibition order.

Clause 6 provides for a notice of intention to be published in the *Gazette* when there is a proposal to prohibit a single-use plastic. The notice of intention is the beginning of the consultation process, which invites written representations from the public, business owners, and environmental groups. A prohibition order shall not come into effect until at least six months have elapsed since the publication of the notice of intention.

Clause 7 provides that no person shall import, sell, or offer to sell, supply or offer to supply, or possess for supply or sale, a prohibited single-use plastic. Clause 7 also makes it an offence for a person to do any of those activities outside of consultation or the transition period.

Clause 8 provides for the removal of prohibited single-use plastics from Schedule 1.

Clause 9 provides for the disposal of prohibited single-use plastics in general and the disposal of forfeited or seized prohibited single-use plastics.

Clause 10 provides that a person can submit a written request to the Director requesting the removal of a specified single-use plastic from the list of

prohibited single-use plastics in Schedule 1, on the grounds that the person considers that there are no viable or cost-effective bio-based or other alternative items available for purchase in Bermuda or from overseas. The Director shall make a decision within six weeks after receiving the request.

Clause 11 provides the appeals process for a person who may want to appeal the decision of the Director not to remove the specified prohibited single-use plastics from Schedule 1.

Clause 12 enables the Director or an authorised officer to enter and search premises with consent or under a warrant and inspect, seize, or detain any single-use plastics or documents where there is a reasonable cause to believe that an offence has been or is being committed.

Clause 13 provides that where the Director or an authorised officer has been refused entry, they can seek a warrant to enter and search the premises.

Clause 14 provides for a written notice of seized items, other evidence seized, and states that the single-use plastics may be forfeited to be provided to the owner, occupier, or person in charge.

Clause 15 provides that the owner, occupier, or person in charge of the business or specified place that the director or an authorised officer has entered into shall comply with the reasonable requirements for assistance made by the Director or an authorised officer.

Clause 16 provides the Director with the power to impose civil penalties on any person for any contravention or failure to comply with the Bill, any regulations, or directions lawfully made.

Clause 17 provides the procedure for imposing civil penalties.

Clause 18 provides the appeals process for a person who may want to appeal the Director's decision to impose a civil penalty.

Clause 19 provides for offences relating to obstruction of the Director or an authorised officer, failure to comply, failing to give assistance or information, giving false information, purporting to act as an authorised officer, and disclosing to another person information obtained by an authorised officer where the disclosure is not made in the performance of his duty.

Clause 20 gives the right to compensation where single-use plastics are seized or detained and the owner, if he is not convicted of an offence, suffers a loss as a result of the seizure.

Clause 21 provides that the Director shall issue guidance for the purposes of this Bill.

Clause 22 gives the Minister regulation-making power.

And finally, clause 23 provides for commencement of this of the Bill.

**The Chairman:** The Minister has read his clauses. Does anyone wish to speak to it?

**Mr. Scott Pearman:** Mr. Chairman?

**The Chairman:** Yes. Honourable Scott Pearman, [constituency] 22, you have the floor.

**Mr. Scott Pearman:** Thank you very much.

Just a couple of quick questions. I will be guided by you, Mr. Chairman. Would you like me to do them one at a time and take my seat, or ask all of them at the same time?

**The Chairman:** I would say ask them all at the same time.

**Mr. Scott Pearman:** Thank you very much.

**The Chairman:** That will help your knees out.

**Mr. Scott Pearman:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My first question, Mr. Chairman, is in relation to clause 2 of the Bill. That is the section providing for interpretation. It makes reference to regulations that may be made under the Act, and there are references to regulations mostly in clause 4 but also elsewhere in the Bill. And my question is, Does the Honourable Minister, who anticipates that Schedule 1 will soon be populated, anticipate that the regulations will precede that or be contemporaneous with the Schedule 1 when produced? So that is my first question.

My second question is similar to the one by my honourable colleague, the Shadow Minister, Linda Smith (not Tucker) which is at clause 5, subsection (3). And this is where the Minister shall not make a prohibition order in relation to a particular single-use plastic unless he (being the Minister) is satisfied on the advice of the Director (which is the director of DENR) that there are, quote, "viable and cost-effective bio-based or other alternatives."

And my question is this . . . and in the debate, we heard about how that is a subjective view. We have heard from the Minister that the discussions are under-going about customs duty relief for such alternative, available, and cost-effective products. And so, my question is this. This is my second question. For the purposes of the regulations when they are made, might the Minister consider a cap so that if the environmentally sensitive alternative is three times more, well, that would be too excessive. Might we have some sort of ratio cap to assist businesses in understanding? Because if it is only, you know, incrementally more expensive, it presumably will be cost-effective. That is my second question, Mr. Chairman.

And with your direction, I will move on to my third. My third question relates to clause 5, subsection (6), which states, "Any single-use plastic in Bermuda before the commencement date of a prohibition order prohibiting it is not affected by the prohibition order if it is only being used for personal use." So, there is a grandfather clause here. If someone already has

something on the island, it will not be affected by a prohibition. That makes perfectly good sense to me. If it is already here, what are we going to do, have them destroy it? I mean, that does not make sense.

But I would invite them, when considering the regulations, to clarify whether that really should be just limited to personal use or whether that could be personal or commercial use. Again, if I order a five-year supply of garbage bags, much though I would prefer they are not in Bermuda and do not exist, but if I have ordered a five-year supply of garbage bags as a business and in comes the prohibition and I have still got four years, you know, some clarification around whether that would be grandfathered in on that one occasion or not [would be good].

And if you do not like that idea, an alternative to the same point is instead of just having six months of notice under clause 6(5), might it be better to give 12 months of notice. So, they make a, you know . . . They reduce the cost of that stock, and they clear that stock. And they have a little bit of a longer period to get rid of it. And I say that as someone who would be delighted to see these things banned.

Moving on, and I have two more, Mr. Chairman. My next one, and I think this is my fourth question, is at clause 12. And it is in relation to subsection (2) and subsection (3) of the Bill. These are powers of entry and search and seizure. And I think it is very important that when the Government or the state seeks to enter people's private premises, we are very clear and the public is not misinformed in any way or misled as to what rights the Government has of entry and what rights the Government does not have absent a judicial warrant.

And I would just point out that [subclause] (2) . . . So, this is clause 12, subsection (2). When read on its own, [it] says this, "The Director or an authorised officer may proceed to enter and search premises under this section where there is reasonable cause to believe that an offence has been or is being committed under this Act." So just read in isolation, that subsection seems to give a power of entry not regulated by the court. Clearly, the Bill goes on to regulate it by the court. My suggestion is merely this; if subsection (2) and subsection (3) were just combined into one subsection, it would be very clear that that is a tempered right of access, and nobody would be misled.

And Mr. Chairman, my final question to the Honourable Minister is in relation to clause 16 of the Bill. This is the power to impose civil penalties. I note that in the Bill that we had drafted, we were looking at something slightly more with more teeth at \$10,000. I commend the Minister for taking a staggered approach. That makes sense. But when we get to clause 16(2)(c), which is the third or subsequent violation by the same entity, I do wonder, and respectfully would invite the Minister to take it under advisement, as to whether when this Bill heads to the Senate, something slightly higher might be done for a serial offender. I think once you have got three strikes, you really should be out.

And that seems like a little bit of a wrist slap to someone who has been told once, been told twice, and is now being told a third time.

So, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for those questions.

**The Chairman:** Thank you.

Anyone else wish to speak to these clauses? Minister, you have the floor.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I certainly want to thank the Honourable Member for his contribution. In relation to clause 2, the Member asked, *Does the Minister anticipate that the regulations will be made prior to a listing?* And regulations will be made as and when needed to support that Act, or this Act, the upcoming Act.

*Would the Minister consider a cap in relation to cost of alternative items?* If the alternative single-use plastics becomes a lot more expensive over time after that prohibition was first implemented, then there is a mechanism within that would allow for those said items to be removed from the Schedule. So, yes, I think the idea is that if we do find it or those prices to be unreasonable, there is also a mechanism for it to be removed.

*Could sections 12(2) and (3) be combined?* I think this is a matter of drafting style. The whole provision to be read as a whole, the comment . . . But certainly something . . . Without making any promises, [it is] certainly something that we can take under advisement to look at and consider.

And so, with that, Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Oh, sorry.

Sorry, I have to move that clauses 1 and 2—all the clauses be approved.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved that clauses [1 through 23] be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No. No objection.

Agreed to.

*[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 23 passed.]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Mr. Chairman, I move that the preamble be approved.

**The Chairman:** You [have] got to move your Schedule, *shed-yools*. Schedules, *shed-yools*. . . . Either way, you have got to move them.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** I move that Schedules . . .

*[Crosstalk]*

**The Chairman:** For the benefit of the listening audience, we are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled Single-Use Plastics Act 2026.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.  
Mr. Chairman, I move that Schedules 1 and 2 be approved.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved that Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 be approved.  
Are there any objections to that motion?  
No objections.  
Continue.

*[Motion carried: Schedules 1 and 2 passed.]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Here we go. I move that the preamble be approved.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved that the preamble be approved.  
Are there any objections to that motion?  
No objection.  
Agreed to.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

**The Chairman:** It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.  
Is there any objection to that motion?  
No objection.  
Agreed to.  
The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

*[Motion carried: The Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

#### House resumed at 3:49 pm

*[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]*

**The Speaker:** Members, are there any objections to the Bill entitled the Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 being reported to the House as printed?  
There are none.  
The Bill has been reported as printed.  
That brings us to a close of the matters on the Order Paper. We will now do . . . But before we do the . . . We do the third reading, and then we will have the Premier introduce the other matter that we [had] come earlier today. So, I will seek your indulgence at that time.

Minister, would you like to do your third reading?

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.  
Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 be now read the third time by its title only.

**The Speaker:** Are there any objections?  
There are none.

*[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]*

**The Speaker:** Continue.

### BILL

#### THIRD READING

##### SINGLE-USE PLASTICS ACT 2026

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill be now read a third time by its title only and passed.

**The Speaker:** The Bill has been read a third time by title only and is now passed.

*[Motion carried: The Single-Use Plastics Act 2026 was given a third reading and passed.]*

**The Speaker:** Now, Members, I would like to seek your indulgence to allow the Premier to introduce another Bill that will be on the Order Paper for our next sitting.  
Any objections?  
There are none.  
Premier.

#### SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 14

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.  
Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 14 be suspended to enable me to introduce supplementary estimates to the Honourable House.

**The Speaker:** Yes, continue.

*[Motion carried: Standing Order 14 suspended.]*

### BILL

#### FIRST READINGS

##### SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

**SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2)  
FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25**

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to the powers conferred by section 96 of the Constitution, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House [of] Assembly, Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 and the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Members, that is now to be added to the items that will be on the Order Paper for the next sitting.  
Premier.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move this Honourable House to now adjourn until Friday, the 29th of May, at 10:00 am. And I am informed that someone on my side wishes to speak.

**The Speaker:** Does any Member wish to speak to that? MP Richardson? Ah!

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** Okay, yes. You have the floor, MP Richardson. You have got your 20 minutes.

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening or this afternoon . . . we are breaking kind of . . . we are getting through the work.

**The Speaker:** Do not take us to the evening. We just want to stay in the afternoon.

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Yes, well, I know.

*[Laughter]*

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, I am in 100 per cent agreement, and we will see how the House reacts.

**ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS**

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, I intend to bring up a matter, which I feel that we are remiss in discussing, because our wider community is discussing it. And it is the state of our road traffic behaviours and deaths.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that our roads have reached the point of barely being governed. We have currently . . . The chief inspector, a former officer in charge of roads policing, has gone on the record

saying we have upwards of 6, or 6 to 12 road traffic collisions per day. I repeat that, 6 to 12 road traffic collisions per day. We have mortality on our roads on a regular basis. And when it is not a mortality, it is a life-changing injury.

As it stands right now, Mr. Speaker, our community is discussing just how bad it is, and every time any one of us drives on these roads, we can see it. It is blatant. It is clear that there is a significant group of drivers who have absolutely no interest in the safety and welfare of the users of our roads.

Mr. Speaker, recently I was on my way from the town of St. George's on my scooter, and I think I was one of maybe five scooter riders that whole time who actually was in traffic. Every other scooter rider I saw was on the other side of the road whether or not there was any traffic coming.

Mr. Speaker, I was on Trimmingham Hill heading south toward Trimmingham Hill roundabout south, and a car overtook three cars going up that hill. And you cannot see over that hill. Mr. Speaker, at this point I am not sure what is happening. How are we going to fix this, because our people are dying on these roads? Everyone is . . . [everyone] knows to keep their hands in the car. Everyone knows that you are . . . You have no idea where the scooter is going to come from next. At this point it is just Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome out there, and at some point, someone's got to do something about these roads and this road behaviour.

And, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that our community knows this, and yet we are not discussing it. This is a problem, Mr. Speaker, because we are sent here to do the people's business, and the people are dying on the roads. Therefore, we should do something about it.

Mr. Speaker, we have tiptoed around this situation with half statements and semi-obligations now for the better part of three to four years and everything . . . every time it ends in the same status quo. It is the same way on those roads.

At this point I am not sure if we even bother with stop signs and stop lights because I do not see anybody stopping. Mr. Speaker, it is dangerous out there, and we need to get to grips with this right now. Mr. Speaker, we have heard all about speed cameras, and we have heard why they cannot be here, and how much it is a complication, and the legal process, and the constitutional aspects. And on and on the excuses go. And the simple fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, this—

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

**POINT OF ORDER**

*[Misleading]*

**Hon. E. David Burt:** The Honourable Member is misleading the House. There have not been any excuses made on matters related to speed cameras.

The Honourable Member will know that the Honourable Minister has given Statements on this. It has been included in the budget. It was debated during the Budget Debate, and there is legislation expected to come. And it was part of the Government's Throne Speech initiative. So, I do not believe it is accurate for the Honourable Member to say that there have been excuses and reasons why it has not been implemented because those have certainly not come from this Government.

**The Speaker:** The Premier has raised a point that it has been mentioned in many Statements.

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Yes, that is exactly my point, Mr. Speaker. It has been mentioned in many Statements. But I do not believe in intentions; I believe in outcomes. And I do not see a functioning speed camera. So, let's get on top of that.

#### POINT OF ORDER

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** Mr. Speaker, point of order. The speed camera system will be up and running in September. There are some speed cameras now being tested on our roads as we speak.

**An Hon. Member:** Aah!

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** And . . . and please let's not politicise this here because speed cameras are not going to stop what you are talking about.

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Mr. Speaker.

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Point of order.

#### POINT OF ORDER

*[Misleading]*

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member . . . I raise a point of order that the Honourable Member was misleading the House.

The Honourable Member said that excuses were being made as to the reasons why they are not being introduced. If the Honourable Member cannot state under what justification he has that, he must withdraw. That is factually incorrect as the Throne Speech, and the budget, and others have committed to the path. And we said the path we are laying out. And the Honourable [Minister] has just said that there are speed cameras that are currently being tested on the roads as we speak.

**The Speaker:** What the Government is trying to point out here is that they laid out a plan, and they are working through that plan now. No, the cameras are not fully operational at this moment. But the plan was always that this be staged in. And it was not targeted to be functional now; but it was targeted to be functional at a period of time that they are working towards.

**Hon. E. David Burt:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member said that excuses are being made for why they cannot be implemented. And what I am saying is that is factually inaccurate because there have been no excuses that have made from this side on why these things cannot be done. And I am saying he has to withdraw that part. He is fine to talk about what it is, because we agree on this matter. But he is saying that excuses are being made and that is not factually correct.

**The Speaker:** The point that is being made on the point of order is that there have not been excuses. There has been a plan that is being executed, and the plan did not say they would have been done yesterday or some time back. The plan is moving now towards the date that was the objective that was already put out there. So, it has not been an excuse why it has not been done. There is a plan that is being worked towards.

So, it would be an excuse if I had said they are going to be done yesterday or six months ago and I am not completing. I am still now making excuses why it was not done. But there was no date set like that. It was a plan that it is being implemented, and these are the steps that are being done. So, it will be working towards that.

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It was not my intention to speak on . . . And I am going to keep going.

**The Speaker:** Basically, the piece of making excuses is what is being asked to redress because there have not been excuses because they just have not . . . They are still working towards the plan.

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Mr. Speaker, I stand to be guided always by your rulings, and I will move on because the road traffic accidents in Bermuda and the behaviour in Bermuda will not be fixed alone by speed cameras. That was one of four points, so I am glad that I was able to get the Government to respond. Let's see how they do on the other three points of this argument.

Mr. Speaker, equally another solution that we need to bring forward as quickly as possible is updating the law enforcement mechanisms for the issuing of citations for misconduct on our roads. We currently are using a paper-based system that has been in use. I left the police in 2008. It is the same system, and the system that I was raised on. My instructors told me [it] started in the 1980s. So, effectively, we are in 2026,

and the problem with this, Mr. Speaker, is because it takes so very long to write a ticket because you have to fill out so much content on that ticket and because you then have to go back to the station—which means leaving your patrol route to put that data in the system. This takes a ridiculous amount of time. So, every time someone has to be issued a citation and summoned to court to deal with the road traffic behaviour, it goes through a process that effectively takes the police officer out of the policing for that day. It is a lengthy process, laborious and inefficient. And as it stands right now, we know we need more cops on the streets. So that is another example of what we can do.

And I do not have [any] idea why we cannot modernise this because if we are going to be a digital on-chain economy, if we are going to be the world's centre for reinsurance, if we are going to be all of these things publicly to the world, then surely we can do better than this.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Jarion Richardson:** Further, Mr. Speaker, I would speak to the court processes for dealing with those tickets and summonses because, as it stands right now, every single traffic offence has to go before the courts. And we have all been to Magistrates' Court in the morning, or Plea Court, and it is a . . . you just spend all that time there just waiting in line while people come up with excuses after excuses for all of the traffic offences. And we just cannot get this bad behaviour under control.

There are two processes that we are talking about here, not just the Plea Court process. In a modern jurisdiction what we would have is an automated process where if a ticket was issued . . . it would be easy to issue, first of all. And if it was issued, it would be easy to pay. And that means we would get more tickets, more discipline on our roads by our law enforcement. We would, in fact, be reinforcing them and making their jobs easier and making our roads safer.

Further, Mr. Speaker, my honourable colleague, the Shadow Attorney General, has made the point about the Coroner's Office and how that process has gone to consultation. And he is very happy to contribute to that because the coroner's process is just as key. You see, Mr. Speaker, we operate a system of laws—not one law. So, it is not just the Road Traffic Act or the Motor Car Act. It is not just the one ticket. It is the entire system that has to tie together to enable us to get a grip of these roads. And these are not glamorous. They are not fancy. But they are necessary because we can see, right now, having such outdated processes and systems means, effectively, that our roads are getting worse and worse by the day.

Mr. Speaker, further and finally, I would add that the infrastructure situation, which the Government has spoken about ad nauseum . . . but the simple fact of the matter is, road traffic accidents are occurring due to road obstacles like potholes. And right now, given

that it is so difficult for the coroner to reach a conclusion, we are not able to get the statistics relating to how many mortalities, or fatalities or injuries are related to that.

So, effectively, Mr. Speaker, the reason why our roads are out of control is because we have not kept up to date with all of the things that we need to. It is a total system, and if we take the whole thing together and we address it, then the roads get under control. As it stands right now, we are losing more and more people. More and more people are getting injured. Our roads are getting less safe, and it is time for serious action.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

Minister Darrell—

**Hon. Owen Darrell:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** —would you like your 20 minutes?

**Hon. Owen Darrell:** Yes, I would, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

**Hon. Owen Darrell:** I definitely will not be taking 20 minutes.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

## ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

**Hon. Owen Darrell:** But I think, as the Minister responsible for Transport, it is prudent for me to get up and respond to the speech of which was just given by my honourable colleague from the other side.

And I want to just highlight the work that is being done by the Road Safety Council. We know we do have a former [chairman] of the Road Safety Council who is here in this House, Mr. Speaker, who was recognised, actually last week during Road Safety Week . . . Dennis Lister III, the Junior Minister for Justice.

And before I get into responding to all of the things that could be done better, I would like to highlight that last week, or two weeks ago, was Road Safety Week, May 3 to 9. And we started the conversation loudly about Operation Action, and we talked about changing minds and changing behaviours. In the middle of Road Safety Week, Mr. Speaker, there was a road safety demonstration on the steps of City Hall, which was attended by the mayor of Hamilton, myself, the King Edward Memorial Hospital emergency doctor, the acting commissioner of police, Allshores Insurance, the chairman of the Road Safety Council, as well as the chairman of CADA [Council for Alcohol and Drug Abuse]. And while I am not going to sit here and attack anything that the Member from the other side said, I would like to say this: The work that these individuals

are doing to try to encourage our public to change behaviours cannot be classified as *half* speeches.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that it is a full complement of members who have been appointed by myself, the Minister responsible for Transport, who take time out of their schedules every week (Wednesdays, to be exact) to meet and strategise how they can spread the message to the public, that changing mind-sets and changing behaviours will go further than any legislation that this Government will put in place, and has put in place, for the behaviours on the road. People need to change their behaviours.

Yes, there are road obstacles. There are actions that this Government is looking to change, and that is for some of my other colleagues to speak about. But the number one reason why we see some of the behaviours happening on these roads is because of distracted drivers, as well as intoxicated drivers, Mr. Speaker. Intoxicated drivers and intoxicated driving are at some of the highest levels that we have seen. And it is unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. But because we do respect the privacy, and we are very cautious of the families who may be grieving in certain times around certain instances, the full scope of what intoxicated driving is doing to individuals unfortunately is not spoken.

But I would ask the Member from the other side to go back and listen to the full speech that was given by the emergency room doctor at the Road Safety Council about a week ago. She was able to give full stats as to how many intoxicated drivers and others are coming through the emergency room. And she even went further to talk about what the strain of some of these accidents is doing for some of the other individuals in the hospital who may need care. So, while I know it may not have been the intent, Mr. Speaker, of the Member from the other side to throw shots, I will go back and say that I am very proud of the work that the Road Safety Council is doing. And you will see some plans that will be rolled out very, very shortly to try to get to the hearts of individuals for them to encourage their family members, their friends to change their mind-set.

Mr. Speaker, I was grateful to see you at the event last week that the Road Safety Council put on to honour some of the individuals of past who have put great time—

**The Speaker:** Yes.

**Hon. Owen Darrell:** —and great effort, great sacrifice into trying to bring about change on Bermuda's roads. We had firefighters there. Mr. Speaker, I do not have to go into detail as to the emotional strain that is on the first responders who have to show up to some of these scenes. Police officers were there as well.

Mr. Speaker, we had the former [chairmen] of the Road Safety Council, including Dr. Joseph Francioni, who has (as you know) significant experience as an emergency room physician. We also had past

[chairmen] of the Road Safety Council. So, Mr. Speaker, while I do agree that this is a very important topic—and it is an important topic—that we must pay attention to more outside of the legislation that will come, and outside of the speed cameras and outside of the changes to certain Acts, the behaviours must change, first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, with individuals' mind-sets.

So, once again, before I take my seat, I will say thank you to the members of the Road Safety Council, which includes members of the Junior Road Safety Council. Say thank you to the past members and past [chairmen] of the Road Safety Council, Mr. Speaker.

And I want to say thank you to the four new members on the Road Safety Council who have stepped up to give their expertise as to what can be done, from the youngest of individuals who go to school to the adults who use the roads every day and will call themselves “experienced” road users. Because I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, when we put out these expressions of interest for different boards, the [number] of expressions of interest that come from people to say, *I believe I can make a difference*.

So, Mr. Speaker, while I do not disagree with the Honourable Member from the other side bringing this to our attention, I must again reiterate that there are individuals in this community who care very deeply about what is happening on these roads, and they are putting some significant time and effort into coming up with further strategies, further examples to give to Government as to how we can possibly change some of the mind-sets. And it starts at home, and it starts with individuals and their own behaviours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Minister.

MP Linda Smith, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

**Ms. Linda Smith:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

## ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

**Ms. Linda Smith:** I actually attended some of the Road Safety Council presentation on the steps of City Hall. I did not know it was on. But I happened to be in town, and it caught my attention, so, I sat down and took in what was left of it. And I did hear the comments from the emergency room doctor and some others. And it was a great event that they had.

But what we have is a problem that is really systemic, and it needs a multifaceted approach to coming to a better place. And one area that . . . and certainly, changing mind-sets is an important part of this. Education is an important part of this. People feeling a responsibility for each other and a sense of courtesy and all of those things. But those happen over time, and

they are not going to happen fast enough to save the number of people who, you know, are going to die in the weeks and months ahead because of the carnage that we see on our roads.

I remember years ago, when people used to talk about, what . . . behaviour on the roads was much better. People were concerned about being caught, taken off the road, losing their licence for a period of time, and all of the inconvenience that went with that. You do not hear anybody talking about that anymore, and you do not seem to see people who really, kind of, feel like there is much of a consequence to misbehaving on the road. It used to be that, you know, people respected the fact that even if you did not respect the other people on the road, you did not want to lose your licence and you did not want the inconvenience for you and your family. You did not want the cost. You would also see a lot more police officers on the road, and certainly just the visual of seeing police officers on the road, you can see the traffic starting to slow down. People start paying attention. Nobody wants to get caught. But if there is nobody around, and nobody is going to get caught, and over a period of time stop signs become invisible. You know, road markings mean nothing. Driving down the middle of the road has just become commonplace. And there is nothing to, kind of, trigger your memory that maybe—or trigger your mind-set—that maybe what I am doing is careless and dangerous and, you know, I could cause a lot of harm with my behaviour. There is just nothing out there to remind you of that.

And I think we need to see a lot more of that. We need to see some enforcement, a lot more enforcement, so that people are going to court and these things are being adjudicated quickly and efficiently. People are feeling the pain of bad driving and bad driving habits. People are getting retrained as to how to develop maybe better driving habits. It does have to be a systemic approach to this.

And the other thing is, it is not just the driving. Because the people who get seriously injured during those 6 to 12 accidents that happen . . . I mean, we all gasp when we hear the ambulances going and the police cars, because we think, *Oh, I hope it is not something horrible*. And invariably, it is something pretty awful. And, you know, it is the cost of those people being in the hospital. It is the problem with the beds, and the overcrowding, and how everybody else who is in the emergency room gets dealt with because of this trauma that has come in.

So, it just, it goes down the line. And it increases the cost of our insurance. The people who are involved in these accidents, many of them have life-changing, debilitating leftover effects from this. So, it makes them less productive than they would have been. It makes their life less, you know, happy and healthy and, you know, liveable than it otherwise would have been. These are life-changing events. And they are also life-changing for the people who are waiting for

a bed in the hospital, who are also having life-changing events but cannot be dealt with because of the trauma that has just come in the door.

And so, you know, I think we just need to look at this, you know, across the board, from so many areas, and tackle it from a number of directions so that we are getting better behaviour, we are getting better enforcement, we are getting better penalties, we are getting better results. And that will help the hospital, and it will certainly help, you know, just trying to maintain what we have. And so, I would like to see that, and I would like to see, maybe, some strategic overall policy or programme or something that incorporates all of these elements, because it is not a single problem. It is not a single issue, it is a multifaceted issue that needs a multifaceted approach.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, MP.

Minister, would you like to make a contribution at this time?

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Yes, good afternoon—

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead, Minister.

**Hon. Jache Adams:** —Mr. Speaker.

#### HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I OF ETHIOPIA FIRST REIGNING KING TO VISIT BERMUDA

**Hon. Jache Adams:** Mr. Speaker, just two weeks ago I had the opportunity to greet His Majesty King Charles III on Trunk Island and accompany him on a boat ride to the Bermuda Aquarium Museum and Zoo, as we commemorated the institution's 100th anniversary. It was one of those . . . it was in those brief moments we shared our deep passion for the environment and, in particular, the protection of our oceans.

Mr. Speaker, whatever one's personal views may be regarding the institution of monarchy, the history of colonisation, or the role of the British Crown in our region, it is not every day that one gets the opportunity to have an audience with a reigning king. It was undoubtedly a historic occasion, and one that I will personally remember for years to come. However, Mr. Speaker, throughout that visit, I repeatedly heard it stated on various forums that King Charles III was the first reigning king to visit Bermuda. And so today I rise simply and respectfully to correct the record. Because while His Majesty was the first reigning *British* king to visit Bermuda—

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** —he was not—and I repeat, he was not—the first reigning king to visit our shores. That

distinction, Mr. Speaker, belongs to His Imperial Majesty, Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jache Adams:** One of the most consequential African leaders of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, who visited Bermuda not once, but twice, during his reign.

Mr. Speaker, before speaking specifically about those two visits, I think it is important to understand who Haile Selassie was, and why his presence in Bermuda carries such significance, particularly for Black Bermudians in the 1960s.

Mr. Speaker, Haile Selassie I was crowned Emperor of Ethiopia on November 2, 1930, at St. George's Cathedral in Addis Ababa. His coronation was watched around the world and marked as one of the most significant royal ceremonies of the modern era. Now, during that coronation, he assumed many titles, including King of Kings [of Ethiopia], the Elect of God, and perhaps most notably, the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Mr. Speaker, there was another important detail about that coronation that often goes overlooked. You see, traditionally at that time, within Ethiopian custom, the Empress would be crowned 30 days later than the Emperor. But Haile Selassie insisted that he and Empress Menen be crowned together on the very same day. This was viewed by many as a profound statement of partnership and shared responsibility between husband and wife.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a bit more context, because by the time Emperor Haile Selassie first arrived in Bermuda, he was already globally respected. He had become internationally admired for resisting fascist Italy in the 1930s, and for standing before the League of Nations to warn the world of the dangers of fascism. In 1936, he was recognised as *Time* magazine's "Man of the Year." Mr. Speaker, with that being an ever so brief history into the life of the Emperor, we note that Haile Selassie's first visit to Bermuda in October of 1963 came at the end of a seven-day ceremonial visit to the United States, where he addressed the United Nations and later met with President Kennedy.

Now, I need this to be noted, that he came to Bermuda after addressing the United Nations. Why? Because it was at that General Assembly he boldly delivered a speech, and within that speech he let the world know: "that until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned; that until there are no longer first class or second class citizens of any nation; that until the color of a man's skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes; that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of

internation[al] morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained."

Mr. Speaker, I am just quoting the King of Kings.

Mr. Speaker, the Emperor stopped in Bermuda for a one-day visit in 1963. Yet, despite its brevity the visit left a lasting impression on this country. Upon arriving at Kindley Air Force Base, the Emperor's first official act was to plant a tree at Government House as a living memorial to his visit. He was then taken on a sightseeing tour that included Gibb's Hill Lighthouse. And that evening the Emperor attended a dinner with local dignitaries, before departing Bermuda the following day.

But Mr. Speaker, perhaps one of the most meaningful details came months later, when the Emperor wrote directly to Bermuda's Governor at that time, expressing his gratitude for the welcome that he had received. And in that letter, Mr. Speaker, the Emperor wrote, "The warm and heartfelt reception accorded us by Your Excellency and the people of Bermuda during our stopover in your beautiful country is still a vivid memory. We shall always treasure and long remember the visit."

Mr. Speaker, to many, the affirmation of those words was demonstrated when just four years later, in 1967, Emperor Haile Selassie returned to Bermuda while travelling to North America to [attend] the Montreal Expo, in 1967. Now this second visit was larger in scale and drew enormous public attention. The Emperor travelled with an entourage of dignitaries, journalists, musicians and dancers. He was met by the full guard of honour from the Bermuda Regiment and the Bermuda Regiment Band, while hundreds gathered for a reception at Government House hosted by the then Governor.

And Mr. Speaker, the historical significance of these visits extended beyond diplomacy or ceremony. For many Black Bermudians in the 1960s, Haile Selassie represented something powerful and deeply affirming. Witnessing a Black African Emperor, a sovereign leader respected across the world, arriving in Bermuda with dignity, prestige and global influence had a profound psychological and cultural impact.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I rise today, not to diminish the significance of King Charles III's visit, nor to make any broader political statement about the monarchy itself. I will leave that for another time and another day. Rather, I rise because history matters. Facts matter. When we speak about "firsts"—particularly within the context of Black history, African history, Bermudian history—we have a responsibility to ensure the record is accurate.

Emperor Haile Selassie I was a reigning monarch. He visited Bermuda in 1963 and again in 1967. And therefore, respectfully, King Charles III was not the first reigning king to visit Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes the correction of history may seem like a small thing. But preserving truth is an important responsibility of this Honourable House.  
Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

### ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

**Mr. Robert King:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Much has been said, and there is much that we can agree upon in terms of where we need to go as a country to make sure that we are all prosperous, especially the vulnerable and the underserved. The question I have is, were Emperor Haile Selassie to be alive today, what would he say about the state of affairs that currently exists in Bermuda since his last visit on this Island? What would he say about the state of our educational system? What would he say about the number of young Black Bermudians who are getting killed needlessly due to violence and lack of opportunity? Overrepresented in prisons, underrepresented in the employment market. Overrepresented in terms of persons requiring services for mental health, and others because of the traumas that they are suffering, because of the circumstances that we are now in since we have a government of the people, for the people, who look like the people who were suffering and oppressed.

What would he say now, about how we are treating those same people, when we are in a position of great responsibility to do something meaningful? We talk about what needs to be done, and we are all in agreement, on both sides of the House. And it is about the execution of the shared vision and mission to make lives better for all of us, especially the underserved and those in need.

So, when we were talking about road traffic deaths and specific things that needed to be done to prevent needless death of young persons in this community, it suggests that a back-to-basics approach is what is required. We knew, those of us who are 55 and older (I guess it is still quite a few people in here), that 65 kilometres and over you were off the road. It was not about points. Now when you go to the court, the Magistrate has to go ahead and break out a calculator, figure out how many points it takes to be over so that you cannot drive. *But let's go ahead and let you drive your construction vehicle, which weighs four times as much as the bike, when you were riding whilst disqualified and we gave you time to pay for four years and you did not. We did not confiscate your bike. We took our time, or it appeared that we took our time, to bring you before the court, to pay your fees owed to the people of this country.*

Our approach to enforcement is actually our approach to enabling the very behaviours that we are

trying to change. When we ride on the roads, bikes and cars, how often do we see a police car? When you get into an accident and somebody has not been hurt, they will drive past and let you sort it out yourself. Hopefully, the person whom you get in accident with is honest, and the licence and everything is up to date, but you are not going to know that. And then when, on occasion, you do call the police who are engaged in other activities and are stretched thin because of the nature of the work, problems are caused, delays are caused, justice is denied. The point is, we have to do things differently. We have to recognise that if we hold the sanctity of life as one of the primary and critical areas of need that we must protect, we must do things differently.

Speed cameras? Absolutely. But I would hope that we would have a traffic squad like we used to, before. RoboCop and Boxhead. For those of you who used to ride, they were there. You knew, if you were speeding, you were going to get caught, and I did.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Robert King:** Yes Paynter.

You knew you were going to be held accountable. You were going to go to court, and you were going to have to pay some money, and chances were you were going to come off the road.

When we are talking about enforcement, we are talking about a presence in the community to address the necessary behaviours that need to change. Parish constables used to be regularly a part of the community. Not for law and order, but to be responsive to the needs of the community. To help connect persons in need and persons who were having adverse childhood experiences to mentorship and other programmes, so that there was not an escalation in the very behaviours that we are trying to change. A community holistic approach.

When we used to have a “wandering abroad,” which was an offence on the books. And then we, rightfully so, according to Human Rights, said that being homeless is not a crime, we did not put any meaningful measures in place to . . . We are not pointing fingers here, what we are talking about is how we approach the problem with the available information that we have. So, this is not a criticism. What we do accept is, the number of homeless people is increasing. That is a fact. Mr. Speaker, 1,331 since last year, when it was 1,101, I think it was. More persons are receiving financial assistance. The cost of living is rising for everybody else.

Behaviours on Front Street where persons are using substances and going to the liquor store right next door to get singles of, you know, Super T's and Elephants, and then causing problems to the persons who are coming off the ferries—locals, tourists. We see it, we ignore it, the problem continues and then last year somebody got killed.

Banners [are] not supposed to be posted. And in certain areas they have come down. I thank the Minister for that. And at the same time, we are not seeing a consistency in enforcement. So, in some areas they are now down, and thankfully so, but in other areas they crop up. You see them by Marsh Folly, by the where the old dump is. I think there is going to be a concert at the end of the month, Sound Clash or something.

*[Inaudible interjections and laughter]*

**Mr. Robert King:** I drive regularly; [I] drive past it. The point is, if we want the certain behaviours to change, we want our Island to look a certain way, we want a lifestyle to be safe and secure, we want people to show care and regard for each other, we have to exercise good judgment and discipline in what we are doing as a Government, and the civil servants, and the people on the front line, all of us working together.

So, the police officer who makes the arrest can be assured that when the person goes to court, the person receives the appropriate justice. When we are talking about impaired driving, we have a culture of driving under the influence. And now, when we have the medicinal cannabis framework, that is going to be another consideration in terms of making sure that the police are properly trained, doctors are properly trained, so that persons using are not going to be using medications irresponsibly.

So, there are all these layers to the levels of responsibility and behavioural change that are required. Absolutely. The Constitution needs to be updated so that we can remain current, and responsive, and respond appropriately to the needs of the community. Absolutely. We are all on board. It needs to be done properly. Enforcement, fundamentally, is the issue. We all agree that things need to change. Current practices, as relates to the one example given about road deaths, is not working. Mr. Speaker, 1,400 deaths . . . 1,400 accidents a year; approximately 136 serious injuries; preventable deaths through knives, guns and road traffic, approximately 17 per year.

And as rightly was spoken about by my colleagues to the right and left, the impact on the community in terms of health care costs, traumas to family, health care, and the list goes on.

What I am asking this Government and this House for, is an agreement to work collectively and collaboratively towards the addressing of these critical areas of need. With strategic plans, with timelines, with approaches that are data driven, and that we are not afraid to discuss what is working well, to take advice from other jurisdictions from the south, north, east and west, all over the globe; what works and implement that and track the results and make the necessary and difficult changes that will impact in the short- and long-term for this community.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any other Member?

MP Famous, would you like your 20 minutes on the clock?

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Go right ahead.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** It seems the OBA is getting very much coordinated with their MTAs.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Teamwork, I was not . . . I was not—

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** I was not . . . I was not . . . it was a compliment.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Take . . . take it.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** What I will say, I do not think the Honourable Member who sat down should conflate what he had to say with what the previous speaker before him had to say, because the reverence of his Imperial Majesty should not be mixed up with what you are trying to use.

## CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Mr. Speaker, I did not get to speak on the condolences. I was caught up with something else, so I would like to take a few minutes to recognise some folks who have passed since the last time we stood here.

Mr. Elroy Eve—

**The Speaker:** You could [hold] them for the next sitting if you like.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Well, we never know what is going to happen next time. The list is only going to get longer.

Mr. Elroy Eve of Devonshire. Mr. . . . Brother Peter Powell, formerly of BELCO. Ms. Leila Chavis (Née Matthie) of St.—used to be of St. George's. Brother Floyd Forth, I would like to associate my name with that. Mrs. Darlene Bascome Emery, a Berkeleyite. You may know her, she was in your, sort of, generation. Mr. Peter Crisson of Crisson's Jewellery. Mr. S-Utchat Massey, also known as Claire Leeann. And Mr. Troy Commissiong, brother of former MP Ralph Commissiong.

*[Inaudible interjections]*

### SENHOR SANTO CRISTO FESTIVAL

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Yes.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend marks the celebration of the [Senhor] Santo Cristo Festival, which is a festival celebrated by persons from São Miguel in the Azores. Now for those who do not know, the Azores are, for lack of a better term, a colony of Portugal. So, there is actually separate islands. São Miguel is the largest of nine islands, and the majority of persons in Bermuda of Azorean descent come from São Miguel.

So, every year they put on an event at St. Teresa's. It used to be our BAA at times, but now it is going to be at Mount Saint Agnes. And so, this year they are trying something to incorporate more Bermudian, make it a little bit more holistic bringing in the Gombey's, the Portuguese . . . sorry, the Filipino dancers. For those who like Malasadas, I suggest you get there early because it is going to be a very long line.

But what it speaks to, Mr. Speaker (and I will speak to another point later on), is that the Azorean persons in Bermuda are part of our culture. Some look straight Azorean, some are mixed, and some you cannot even tell but they have Azorean blood. But they are as Bermudian as the rest of us, Mr. Speaker. And there was a time that the then colonial government (King Charles's people), did not allow Azorean men to bring their families here. They said, *No! You are here to work; you are not here to socialise*. So, you know what the inevitable result of that will be, Mr. Speaker.

So, I encourage all of Bermuda to learn about the Santo Cristo Festival, irrespective of their own religious beliefs, but this is a part of our Bermudian culture.

### CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Mr. Speaker, I also want to give congrats to two of our sister parties who have recently been, what is the correct word for it?

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Returned to power in the Caribbean.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Hmm?

**An Hon. Member:** Successful.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Yes, extremely successful. The first congrats goes to the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party. Last year, we had Minister Chet Greene come and be our guest speaker at our annual banquet. Yes, MP Tyrrell's friend—

**An Hon. Member:** Football friend.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Football friend.

And on April 30, the Antigua Barbuda Labour Party went from 9 seats to 15. Mr. Speaker, 15 out of 17 seats. What did that speak to? That spoke to the fact that they are stable. The people in the country realise, irrespective of the noise of the Opposition party, that they have seen progress under the Antigua Barbuda . . . Barbuda, sorry, Labour Party. And they will return to power.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, most of us have Caribbean heritage. Many of us have Caribbean heritage. And I can proudly stand tonight to say one of my cousins was elected for the first time. She was a Senator, now she's an MP and a Minister.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in our sister island of The Bahamas—the Commonwealth of The Bahamas—the Progressive Liberal Party, the original PLP, was returned to power on May 12. Out of 41 seats, the Progressive Labour Party of The Bahamas—

**An Hon. Member:** Liberal.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Sorry, Progressive Liberal Party. Oh, thank you for that correction. The Progressive Liberal Party of The Bahamas has 33 of those seats. So, it is safe to say that that is a landslide.

Now for those who remember, Mr. Speaker, in 2022, the Prime Minister, the Honourable Brave . . . Philip “Brave” Davis, and many of his Ministers came to Bermuda to speak during our annual convention. They reminded Bermudians, especially the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party family, of the connections between the PLP in Bermuda and PLP in The Bahamas, the shared values and the shared motto. We both say, “PLP all the way.”

Mr. Speaker, in stark comparison, in the UK, the British Labour Party has suffered some terrible losses as of late. It appears as if the fascist (Is that the word, fascist?)—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Fascist party, the Reform Party, have made inroads in turning British . . . sorry, English people against everyone else. The fascist Reform Party has made inroads in local elections to the chagrin (Is that is the word, chagrin?)—

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** To the chagrin of many. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that Prime Minister Keir Starmer probably will not last until July. He has not one, not two,

not three, but possibly four of his own MPs trying to take his seat.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I actually look back and I say, *Well, did not this happen underneath the (What do you call that?) Conservative Party?* You had David Cameron. Then you had, what is the lady's name?

[Inaudible interjection]

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** No, before her.

[Inaudible interjection]

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** They have had, in the last 10 years, there have been six British Prime Ministers.

What is the point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker? There are those who say, *Look to the UK for stability*. But a Prime Minister cannot last more than two years in the UK, if that. So how are they any beacons of morality for anyone else? They are not.

Meanwhile, in the Caribbean, Prime Ministers are lasting six and seven, sometimes 10 years. So, I say to the people, do not ever come to us and say, *Look to the UK for political stability*, because there is none there.

Is Minister[sic] Fahy, I mean Michael Fahy here?

No? He is gone?

No, he is not here.

#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING INITIATIVE

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Mr. Speaker, moving on to housing. As we know, we have a challenge with affordable housing in Bermuda. And rightfully, people are asking, *What is the Government doing about it?* Well, last week, Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda Housing Corporation opened four renovated units [on] Middletown [Lane]. Four is not a lot in the grand scheme of things. We'll be opening five more before Cup Match. Nine is not a lot in the grand scheme of things. So, Mr. Speaker, last week, Monday, the Honourable Minister Zane De Silva launched his affordable housing initiative.

So, a lot to read, but basically it says that the Bermuda Government is committed to building hundreds of affordable housing units in this country. So, I say to the people, number one, your Government is doing something. But I also say to the people, all right? That the government owns land in the extremes of the Island. In the extreme east, down at Southside. In the extreme west, west of Watford Bridge. That is the right place, Watford Bridge, MP?

**An Hon. Member:** Yes.

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** West of Watford Bridge. Great.

So, when we start building these affordable units, they are not going to be single units. They cannot be single units. It is not cost-effective to do that. They are going to be multiple story units. No, they are not going to be skyscrapers. They are going to be multiple storeys.

And no, they are not going to be built the traditional Bermuda way. They are going to be built precast panels. *What are precast panels?*, people are asking. Anyone here, anyone familiar with Frog Lane, Top Square, Hermitage Road, Boaz Island, even? There are precast houses that were built 40 years ago under the United Bermuda Party that still stand and will probably stand for another 400 years. Because that is the quality of the material.

So, for those who think that the Government, via the Bermuda Housing Corporation, are building some fly-by-night thing, it is not true. The cost of building in Bermuda, Mr. Speaker, as you would know, is nearer to \$700 to \$800 a square foot. By doing the precast panels we are able to do it for substantially less. So, I just want to reassure people that the Bermuda Government, via a generous grant from the . . . not grant, sorry. What do they call that? Guarantee. A guarantee from the Ministry of Finance, [to be] able to do these sorts of things.

#### CARICOM

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Finally, Mr. Speaker, last night I was invited to be a panellist at an event in Somerset. And I was thinking to myself, what should I wear? What should I wear?

[Crosstalk]

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** No, I did not. And I decided, let me just wear something neutral-ish.

But anyway, Mr. Speaker, the point is that I was invited to a panel up at St. James Church Hall to talk about CARICOM. Bermuda is moving forward as, potentially moving forward as, a full member of CARICOM. Now, we all know what the weather was like yesterday. It was kind of iffy, but a good turnout was had—interesting turnout, seating arrangements, the way people sat. And then, as the panellist with the Honourable Alexa Lightbourne, and the Honourable Attorney General, Kim Wilkerson, gave their dissertations. I gave my part.

And then the questions came. And you have to ask yourself, *Are we here talking about CARICOM? Or are we talking about something that somebody wants to divert the topic?* You see, Mr. Speaker, it is pretty obvious when people do not want to actually discuss the issue at hand, they bring up these things called “red herrings.” *What about the trees? What about the roads? What about this?* And you are saying, *You know, this isn't the Minister for that.* [Then they ask:] *What about emigration?*

So, you see, Mr. Speaker, here it is. The Minister is taking her time, and the DCI and all the other folks, taking the time to set up this whole . . . to give people information. Information that they say, *We want more information*. But when you actually give them the platform to ask those questions, they want to ask other things to turn away from the actual topic.

You see, one of the questions they ask is, *What about all the money you are going to be spending for this thing? Why are you going to spend all this money?* It is a valid question. *What are you getting in return?* And I am sorry I did not get to answer somebody because then I said . . . and I go back to what the Honourable Jache Adams said, *What about all the money we spent on the Governor every year? What about all the money we spend on his staff every year? What about all the money we spent refurbishing Government House?*

The Governor . . . the Governor does not work for the people of Bermuda, folks. He works for the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, a.k.a. the British Government, a.k.a. the Crown. And we, as the colonised, are paying his salary. We, as the colonised, are paying his travel expenses. We, as the colonised, are paying for his housing. That big house, the biggest house in Bermuda, for one person. They ask, *Why are you spending all this money on CARICOM?* No one asks how much money we spent when the King came here. Sorry, the second King came here. No one asks us that. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have a mind-set in this country that if it is of colonial colour, it is okay. Spending money; do not ask any question. But anything to do with the Caribbean, it is an issue. Anything. I am going to say it again: Anything that is of colonial history (present day) it is no problem, spend the money. Oh, we got to go England again, spend the money. Oh, we got to bring in somebody from England, spend the money. No one asks us.

But the minute we are talking about an institution to help move us as Bermudians, all of us, forward, it becomes an issue. We have to be honest as a country, Mr. Speaker. We have double standards. All right? And I am not saying that we have all the answers in regard to CARICOM. But what I can tell you, of the money we spend on the Governor, we do not get anything back. The UK does not send any money down here.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** What money [do] they send here?

*[Inaudible interjections]*

**Mr. Christopher Famous:** Anyway, my point, Mr. Speaker, is this. When we stand up, we have to face the Union Jack in the year 2026. Everything we do in this country is based off of a colonial history. But no one

has a problem with that. But the minute Black people start saying, *Let's talk to other Black people*, it is an issue. That is what we really have to examine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, MP.

Is there any other Member? Minister? Okay. MP Swan has the floor.

### ROYAL VISIT INVITATION NOT RECEIVED BY MP

**Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I hadn't intended to speak on the motion to adjourn today. But I feel compelled, as one who is old enough to remember the direct influence of His Majesty, Haile Selassie's appearance in Bermuda. In fact, I had a schoolteacher who I was very close to. We used to call him Emperor, because he looked just like His Imperial Majesty. And his name was (the late) Chesley Trott. I considered it an honour to offer a tribute at his memorial service at Barr's [Bay] Park.

The Emperor, his presence in Bermuda. I am old enough to remember my mentor, the late Walter King, Member of Parliament for Hamilton East, who actually introduced me to politics somewhat, along with the other golfers who hung around the golf course and talked politics when they were not playing golf. He was a member of the UBP before he switched over and then joined the PLP and ran in [19]76 and got elected. And within a month, was standing on the very lawn of Parliament, greeting Her Majesty the Queen, of which I did not realise at that time.

But Walter Lister, who got elected that same election, sent me those pictures as I was writing articles about Mr. King's legacy in golf and his impact on me. Because as a young person trying to emulate one of my mentors, I actually sit in Parliament as a direct result of Mr. King. And as the Opposition Leader, I remember when Her Majesty visited Bermuda when Dr. Brown was the Premier of Bermuda, and all Members of Parliament were afforded the opportunity to meet. Because unlike anybody else that is in Bermuda, not too many swear an oath. We swear an oath when we come to Parliament. You swear an oath when you become an Opposition Leader or a Cabinet Minister. You swear an oath when you become a Junior Minister. You pledge allegiance to Her Majesty, or His Majesty, and their heirs.

And I do think that had the Imperial Majesty come to Bermuda, as he did go to Jamaica in 1963, a year after independence, he would have done the same thing that he did there. He would have addressed Parliament, and all Parliamentarians would have had an opportunity to have met him. You know, I'm old enough to . . . you know, I grew up in golf. And one thing about golf, we call penalties on ourselves, because we aim to be better than anybody else, no matter

what our circumstances are. And fairness is first amongst that.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say I wasn't here when the King visited Bermuda. I was actually in Windsor when he was here. I was actually having a meal where I could look down a lane, where I could walk 25 yards—no, 25 paces, just 25 yards—and look up that lane and see Windsor Castle. And I'll say this, the waiter who told me that he [had been to] Bermuda, said, *We're here, your King is there*. He said, *I'm glad you're here, because I don't care too much when he's here*.

So, I said, *It's in reverse*. I said, *My folks are waving, my folks are waving flags. But as a Parliamentarian overseas I never received an invite*.

And I do not think that is right. And whoever was responsible for that, I am here to say it is not right! You cannot have a sovereign of a country come here and not do that. And if I am not prepared to say it here, I shouldn't be here!

I said my piece.

I feel for those Members who may only serve one term. But as in 1976, when the Progressive Labour Party and my mentor sat in Opposition, he had an opportunity to choose if he so wanted to. He did not have to be there, because I am sure Members chose not to be there, but they had a choice.

And Mr. Lister, who raced me out of Somerset in 1983 when I ran (you know a little bit about that), is seen with his spouse—with his spouse—meeting Her Majesty, I believe. And I am one of the few people who will stand here and tell you in this Parliament that they actually voted for independence in 1995 and still indicate that I would love independence for Bermuda tomorrow. But right is right.

### SOUTHAMPTON PRINCESS HOTEL

**Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan:** Mr. Speaker, on right is right, I just want to thank the Government on this occasion for having the courage to see through bringing to this shore the restoration of the Southampton Princess Hotel. When I was away, I saw soft announcements coming forth. And I was reminded of the fact that it was not an easy process. There were objections on a number of fronts, and there were persons who did not want it. And I am glad to have been one of those who saw the need for it.

And let me declare my interest, as I often do when I go on this wicket, that I am a boy of Southampton soil, who had a great-grandmother whose property was compulsorily acquired to do that to make sure that there was a product on that hill for the purpose of tourism. Emily Bascome . . . not . . . Emily Bascome was her daughter. The property of Emily Burrows Hall, my great-grandmother, mother of my grandmother, Ivy, was compulsorily acquired in Southampton for the building of that property.

So, to be able to say that even if you cannot get 100 per cent correct everything you do, but to say that we have come to a point where the largest amount of investment in the country has taken place to realise a project of such, I am here to say that I am proud of that. I am proud to have been a part of making sure that at this time in excess of . . . and somebody might correct me on this. More than \$300 million, more than a quarter of a billion dollars, maybe closer to half a billion dollars will be injected into this economy because of decisions to make sure that we increased our hotel stock and had a flagship hotel property return to Bermuda. And I believe that over the years we have seen that progression taking place.

I believe, in a mindful world, that we will take the opportunity to look at the glass as half full rather than finding all the reasons why to look at the glass as half empty. And because I have been doing a little bit of . . . I am not making excuses for having to navigate a little bit in Hamilton Parish because of all that rain and what is been left, my water hazards that exist. But it is not lost on me that as I navigated other countries, including the motherland, they have issues with roads as well. And so, we are not too dissimilar to many other jurisdictions that have to navigate through periods of fiscal financial challenges.

I believe we have done that, you know. I believe that since 2017, the Government of which I was elected to in 2017, has become more fiscally prudent, conservative enough to be able to pay down the debt, but responsible enough to be able to look after seniors and social programmes. And I believe you will see more, because I believe more has to be done in that area.

But I think you will get it and you are getting it more here than the persons who would look at the glass as half empty. And come and, you know, be able to provide that type of dialogue to be able to let persons not focus on how significant it is that we made a decision to move forward and have the date certain, or date near certain, where we can look and see groups coming to this Island to Southampton.

And that was a decision that was first made in the 60s when the Southampton Princess was first built, and it was accompanied by another development, a development at Port Royal Golf Course, which allowed *Time* magazine and all those big convention groups that used to come. And what you have seen in recent years is redevelopment there where we have a product there that hosts, that provides global awareness where the reintroduction of the Southampton Princess will bring people who will look to a world-class facility, and it encourages other facilities to upgrade. And where do we see that? Well, we would see that at Elbow Beach, wouldn't we? You see The Loren [at Pink Beach] on stream has now looked West, and we are grateful for that.

And I am sure, I am sure that the Opposition can take some credit for their involvement in properties

such as The Loren and down there in St. George's. But let me just go to St. George's and herald something that a young Bermudian invested in. Hillcrest Boutique Hotel. Ms. Veronica Gordon. A lady who, in my estimation, is a visionary when it comes to development, because it is not our first rodeo with development. And she has an eye to be able to look a property and see potential beyond it. And she has looked at a property which has great historical value for the Town of St. George's.

And I knew Ms. [Ellen] Trew Robinson, who had two sons that were actually connected to this House of Assembly. The former of the sons, Delaey Robinson, and also Mr. Cecil Clarke, right? Representing the Progressive Labour Party. So that property came of great historical significance. But Ms. Veronica Gordon saw what could be done in the modern context of what visitors look for, combining elegance with privacy, providing the type of property that would fit well within a town where you can walk to everything.

So, within the Town of St. George's, you now have three hotel properties. I have also said that in the East End in particular, with Grotto Bay [Beach Resort & Spa] being in the Parish of St. George's as well. And Castle Harbour being partially . . . Castle Harbour, you can . . . the Tucker's Point sitting on Castle Harbour being partially in St. George's Parish. The Mid Ocean Club is partially in St. George's Parish as well. And The Loren being next door, you know.

You know, I voted for independence. We have everything there but an airport to, you know, consider going independent ourselves, you know. But I say that tongue-in-cheek to say that, you know, we have an opportunity to market ourselves very jealously with the three golf course properties that we have in Bermuda, representing about 40 per cent of that product on Island right there in the East End. And I see interest growing.

I often say, and I did not . . . I learned this on the doorstep many years ago. And I often herald what the late David White, editor of the *Royal Gazette*, told me when I used to canvass him. He used to say, *Kim, never lose sight that St. George's was always a working town. It was the first capital of Bermuda.* Commerce is a bedrock. Commerce in St. George enables persons not to have to commute to Hamilton to work or have the choice not to.

I was one of those persons coming to St. George's in 1985, opening up one of the larger, . . . becoming one of the larger employers there. When I came to St. George's, a town that my grandfather actually lived in when he was a boy, John Anderson, my grandfather, and his siblings lived in St. George's as well. A lot of people do not know that, but I have to drop that in every now and then. But we Andersons are connected to the ocean.

And the connections between Somerset and St. George's are not just Cup Match, you know. It is because it was easier to get to the West End and Dockyard and back to those two maritime areas by boat than it was by land. And so, you know, you will see Swans

that are in St. George's that look just like Swans in Somerset. Sometimes that is not by accident, you know. I mean, you know, not everybody knows those types of things. Well, but that does not, that is not too dissimilar with many, many folks.

What I am here to say is that in many aspects in tourism, we have more to celebrate and more to look forward to in a positive way than what sometimes we focus on.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as I said on the congrats, I gave congratulations to the movement of Lord St. George. I declare my interest. In the 1990s I would have been one of those young persons who made history by walking down on the square in St. George's. And I see today the young people have changed their mindset, have embraced the visiting lodges in Bermuda. You could only wear St. George's colours there. They have opened it up where persons can come from, and Bermuda has more everything per square mile than anywhere in the world. More golf courses, more churches, more bars, more Masonic lodges. And they opened it up to embrace everybody.

But when they did that, they invited folks from The Bahamas who come, they invited folks from New York who come, they have invited persons from Canada who come, they invite people from the UK to come. And what you are seeing now is the Peppercorn Ceremony, which celebrates the lodges, one lodge, now 200 in Bermuda embracing Freemasonry and all lodges through St. George's, inviting people to Bermuda for cultural tourism.

And I am here to say that celebrating cultural tourism, celebrating sports tourism, celebrating the arts and tourism, celebrating educational tourism, celebrating medical tourism, where you are connecting people on Island and organisations on Island with their connections overseas is where we need to put our monies. I have been saying it, I believe it, I know it to be true, I have participated in making it to prove certain.

In 1957, a younger man came to Bermuda and opened a hotel on that Southampton coast that I grew up on, Pompano Beach. Mr. Lamb, his sons are around my age now, and they participated in sports tourism par excellence. They have a template. I want to tell you that around 1999, when I got out of the business, my assistant, Alex Medeiros, a very progressive young man (I am very proud of him), living in South Carolina, who was one of my apprentices, took that event, took our events that we transported from Castle Harbour to St. George's, and took it up there. And those events still go on today.

When you invest in relationships, when you invest in the people in Bermuda who have connections overseas you will end up with a Newport to Bermuda, Annapolis to Bermuda, a Race Week, a Pompano Couples, a Pompano Ladies. You will come up with events that stand the test of time.

And in my final minute, I want to say, when it comes to honours, there is a gentleman that stands out

far most to me. And I declare my interest, I love golf. But Bob Carrero from Glebe Hill, in Tucker's Town, took it upon himself during COVID-19 to say that this Bermuda event, which is the oldest pro-amateur golf event in the world, will not die. And with only eight teams he made sure that that tournament remained continuous. Up until December of last year, he had over 75 foursomes with family members of some of the most iconic clubs in the entire globe. And that is no mean feat. Why? Because he loves Bermuda, and he has international connections that he was not afraid to leverage on behalf of his beloved Bermuda.

And I am saying that that template is the same template of Race Week. It is the same template that I have seen exercised in many other sporting and cultural events that stood the test of time in our country.

Mr. Speaker, I will do my part with the breath left in my body to try to make that a reality, connecting us with the people that love Bermuda, finding people, more people, to fall in love with Bermuda through the people of Bermuda, both in Bermuda and around the world.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Honourable Member.  
Does any other MP?  
Mr. Weeks.

#### HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I OF ETHIOPIA FIRST REIGNING KING TO VISIT BERMUDA

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In my time here in this Honourable Chamber, every now and then there is this speech, especially on the motion to adjourn, where sometimes somebody should just drop the microphone and we go home for the evening.

Tonight, Mr. Speaker, that is the way I felt when my colleague from Public Works spoke on the history of [Emperor] Haile Selassie [of Ethiopia]. I am one of those that, as an MP for Back O' Town, so to speak, it's a large Rasta population. So, I got an earful when people said, *Well, the King that came, King Charles [III] was not the first to come.* And I could not have articulated any better, even if I had practiced what my colleague has done. So, hats off to him for that brilliant, brilliant history lesson, and I am glad others—

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** Yes. Yes. Okay.

*[Inaudible interjection]*

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** And right. Well, actually, yes, peace and love.

*[Laughter]*

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** But, Mr. Speaker, before I go on to my remarks, I want to also mention that a lot of us, some of us on this side of the floor, do have some Azorean connections, some Azorean roots. Yes. And I proudly say I am one of them. Right?

And I said without reservation that, you know, before time and we were separated, when the Blacks and Portuguese were separated, most of us lived in the same communities. You know, and as a result, I have a great-grandmother that was from São Miguel. Okay?

#### ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** So, moving right along, Mr. Speaker, I have to say that it is always, it is always humbling when we talk about the road carnage. And that is one thing that I feel that our House,—our House on either side—is united on. So, this is not to criticise anyone, but just to agree that we have some real carnage that we have to address.

And we have to be clear that this is not a new phenomenon. We have had people die on the roads almost at one a month for years on average. Life-altering accidents have been happening for years. And I must stress that a lot of times when we talk about the road deaths and the road carnage, we talk about it as being a young-person's event. That is not the case, Mr. Speaker. People get in these accidents, either life-altering or losing their lives, from every age group, just about, in Bermuda. You know, so it is more than just our youngsters.

But what I want to say, just as a point of clarification, and not only for the Member from I think, constituency 23 . . . constituency 22. Well, 22 or 23.

An Hon. Member: Twenty-three.

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** Twenty-three.

I just want to make something clear, Mr. Speaker. This Government has pledged for a couple of years now in one of our Throne speeches to address the speed on the roads. We now have put money toward it over the last 18 months.

We have a working group from TCD, the Bermuda Police Service, the Attorney General's Chambers. And what we are doing is how we change legislation so that when we are fully operational with these speed cameras, tickets are going to be able to be issued electronically through email or via people's phones. So, I am saying to be clear that the antiquated system that we talked about is on the verge of being no more.

The current cameras we have, what we are testing, licence plate recognition. So, there are some things that this Government is doing—not talking about doing, Mr. Speaker, but we are actually doing—to enhance the capability and the assistance of the Bermuda Police Service in doing their job. But I want to stress too that it is a community effort, Mr. Speaker, that is

needed. It is going to be more than enforcement that is going to fix the carnage on the road.

### BERMUDA DAY

**Hon. Michael A. Weeks:** Now, having said that, Mr. Speaker, my contribution on the motion to adjourn today was none of that. As the Minister responsible for National Security, what I wanted to talk about in the motion to adjourn was the upcoming Bermuda Day holiday. And always around this time I have tried to rise to my feet and talk about the holiday that is coming up. And I am not talking about the holiday as the Minister, because I, too, am one of those revellers who is out there enjoying myself during the Bermuda Day holiday.

We enjoy the culinary festivity and different camps that we may come across. We enjoy the Gombays, Mr. Speaker. I enjoy, too, that old saying, *letting your hair down*, if not regularly, but there are certain occasions that one wants to be just a part of the partying, the festivity, enjoying the Bermuda Day holiday.

But in saying that, it is incumbent of me to say that safety has to be a part of this. We have to look out for one another. We have to enjoy our culture. This year's theme, I think, is For the Culture. It is a brilliant theme because that could help us recognise and realise that this is more than one big party. It is really about us celebrating each other, who we are, but not without understanding that it is our duty to look out for each other.

Holidays do not give us a right to all of a sudden say, okay, we can ride or drive any way we want. Alcohol and drugs are still a no-no. So, as the Minister responsible for Security, like others, I want to enjoy myself. But I want us to enjoy it peacefully, Mr. Speaker. Peacefully, without any carnage on the street, without any violence in our communities.

But we can enjoy ourselves and keep each other in mind. Safety is utmost, and I wish everyone a good and safe Bermuda Day holiday weekend.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Opposition Leader, would you like your 20 minutes?

### ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

**Hon. Ben Smith:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, several of the speakers tonight have spoken about the safety and lack of safety on our roads, and I thank the Minister for what he just said.

The issue that we have has been said a couple of times; it is multifaceted. This behaviour is not new. Bermuda's had bad behaviour on its roads for a really long time. If you go back through history, road deaths have happened on our roads for an extended period of time.

In the era that some of us grew up in, pack racing was the thing that everybody was complaining about. Large packs of bikes racing really fast all around the Island. But as we became more busy, our roads became more busy, pack racing seemed to go away. But some of that behaviour has now become an individual behaviour. And it is personal responsibility that we have to actually talk about.

Because you can legislate. We can put in all kinds of rules and regulations and punishments, and we can even, as the Minister of Tourism and Transport, [Culture and Sport] was saying, we can have initiatives to communicate and have whole programmes to educate our population on changing the behaviour. But what it is going to come down to is personal responsibility because many of the people that are behaving in the way that they are, are not actually going to listen regardless of the changes that we make.

And I think it's important that this isn't a blame game. I think everybody in this Chamber agrees that this behaviour has to change. One more death on our roads is too many. But when you look at some of the enforcement that we put in, we have sobriety checkpoints. Mr. Speaker, we announce the sobriety checkpoints in advance. And people complain that we do that because they feel it makes better sense if we just have the sobriety checkpoint. But Mr. Speaker, after a long weekend—with advance notice that we are going to have sobriety checkpoints—the statistics say 20-something people get pulled over after either drinking or, you know, being intoxicated by other substances. So, personal responsibility. Once again, they are not paying attention to the things that we are saying.

These decisions that we make have to change. Some of it will be enforcement. Some of it means that we are going to have to increase penalties. We are going to have to have more ways of enforcement.

Mr. Speaker, I think sometimes when we point out some of these things, it comes across like we are challenging. I think it is really just together we need to have solutions because in this Chamber we do not want to see this continue.

From a policing standpoint, at one point in Bermuda, there were over 30 officers that were involved in the cycle unit or traffic. The Minister can correct me with exact details, but that was about the number, and now I believe that number is around six. But that is because policing has changed, and the police have had to move into other areas. And that is why you do not see the police everywhere dealing with the traffic. But if you cover the roads with police the behaviour does not seem to change. We have a road death, and the very next day there are 12 accidents.

No one listened to what happened on the radio. No one paid attention to what we have said in this Chamber. Family members tell our young people, or not so young people, before they leave that night, *you got to look out on the road*, and the behaviour does not change. High speed plus being intoxicated, and

probably the thing that we do not talk about the most is cell phones. When you see cars that are flipped over, a lot of times that is not just intoxication; that's because they were not paying attention to the road at all because they were looking at a phone. They got to get that last text in, but it might be their last text.

We have to change the behaviour of our people. We have got to educate our young people by not just having policing but having every single person in our community making sure that you are talking to our youngest of young, that that behaviour has to change.

But Mr. Speaker, how many of us have seen people overtaking speeding with a young person on the bike with them? What lesson are they teaching that young person? When they turn 16, there is no way their behaviour is going to be any different than what they learned from the time they were little. So, when we are talking about our culture, we have to make sure that we are changing our culture on the roads.

And I thank the Minister because it is not just the culture on the roads that is harming our people. Every time we get next to one of our big celebrations, we have people who end up with hotheads, and then the violence increases. And instead of preparing for the parade, or preparing for the half-marathon, or preparing for being with family and friends, there are people in our community who are preparing to create carnage. Our community. They are not worrying about the celebrations and thinking about our heritage and what we are celebrating. They are thinking about how to hurt other people from our community.

And all of these things are linked up. So, we cannot be up here blaming each other. What we have to do is figure out how we can work together to use every possible solution to change the behaviour. Because the last thing I want is to come back after everybody's celebrating Bermuda Day for us to be giving more condolences. To be visiting people in the hospital because they have been injured because of the behaviour on our roads or the behaviour with the violence in our neighbourhoods.

This is an opportunity next Friday for us to celebrate with our community. For us to celebrate with our friends and family. For us to celebrate what is the best of Bermuda. Celebrate our culture. Bermuda is another world. And I mean that in the positive way that my father wrote that song. Not the behaviour that it has become where they say Bermuda is another world in a negative term. That frustrates me the most. Because that is not the Bermuda that I think anybody in this room wants to see, Mr. Speaker.

We have to elevate our behaviour. We have to expect more of each other. We have to look out for our neighbours. And we have to have personal responsibility. That means take a taxi. That means prepare for how you are going to get home. And that means when you see an argument escalating, pull your friend aside. Take the time to talk to that person and see if you can cool down those heads. And when you know that the

person next to you potentially had one too many, take the time to talk to them. That might be the life you save. That is the responsibility of how this country was built, taking care of each other. And we know that it can still happen regardless of all the protections, regardless of all the things that we want to have happen. But if we all try, that is how we are going to make our community whole.

## BERMUDA DAY

**Hon. Ben Smith:** So, Mr. Speaker, I want to [wish] every person that has been preparing for the half-marathon good luck in the upcoming week. All the people who have been preparing for the parade, I am hoping that we have beautiful weather so that you can put on the show for our community. And all the family members who have been thinking about the food and festivities that they are going to have. And as the Minister said, all of us will be partaking in our different ways. But if you are going to have a little cold libation, make sure you are doing it safely, that you are not putting yourself and others at risk, that you are not getting to the point where you are not in control. These are the things that we can do for ourselves that help us to help our community.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish every person in this Chamber, every person that is listening and our entire community a very wonderful Bermuda Day coming up. And let's make it safe. And let's celebrate Bermuda and Bermuda's culture. And next time that we are in this House of Assembly, I am hoping that we do not have to have any of those negative comments and any of those things where we are giving condolences. Instead, we should be talking about all the wonderful celebrations.

So, to you, Mr. Speaker, and everybody else, have a wonderful Bermuda Day and let's make it safe. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** [Microphone off]

## NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

**Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To you, Mr. Speaker, to my fellow colleagues, and to all of the listening audience. On Thursday, May 7th, we gathered for the National Day of Prayer. This was a moment set aside, not for politics, but for what has always held this country together at its deepest level. Our recognition that we are accountable to someone higher than ourselves.

The National Day of Prayer falls within Heritage Month, and that is no accident. For our heritage is not only in our languages, our traditions, and our struggles. It is in the faith that carried our foreparents through them.

In years past, faith was central to public life. It shaped our schools, our communities, and the way we

spoke to one another across our differences. Prayer has always opened Parliament, but it was also taught in homes and in our schools. It was lived out in the way that our neighbours treated one another. When faith was at the centre, certain things followed naturally. There was a shared expectation of honesty, of keeping your word, of respecting your elders, of protecting the vulnerable. Duty came before self. Restraint was seen as strength and not weakness.

As that centrality has faded from public view, we see the cost in the daily life in this country. We see a decline in morals. We see a decline in respect for one another. We see a decline in the basic civility that allows a society to function. We see disrespect towards authority. Towards institutions. And disrespect toward each other has become commonplace.

Trust erodes when there is no shared standard beyond personal preference. The National Day of Prayer was a chance to pause and name that connection again. I just heard the Opposition Leader ask for a solution to the challenges that we are facing in this community. And I would offer, and I read the Scripture is found at Philippians 4: 6 through 8: "Do not be anxious about anything. But in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus."

It further goes on to say, "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent, if anything is praiseworthy, think about such things."

This is a call to faith, to prayer, and to the words that we speak about one another and about our future. It reminds us that the health of a nation depends not only on its laws, but on the hope and character of its people. It is not about imposing one tradition on all. It is about remembering that a nation without reverence becomes a nation without restraint. When we restore prayer to its place, not just in this Chamber when we start in the morning, but in our homes and in our communities, we restore the moral foundation that makes freedom possible and makes citizenship meaningful.

So today, let us pray for this Parliament, for wisdom beyond our own. Let us speak positively about the future of this, our Island home. Refuse to let cynicism drown out our hope. Let us pray for our communities, for healing where division has taken root. And let us pray for ourselves that we may restore the faith and character that define our heritage and must define our future. May our heritage and our culture be remembered not only in song and dress and in celebration, but in the faith that built it and in the hope we choose to speak into our tomorrow.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and a very happy Bermuda Day to everyone. Thank you.

*[Desk thumping]*

**The Speaker:** Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to make a comment?

Minister, you have your 20 minutes.

### **BERMUDA DAY (Premier's well wishes)**

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier could not be here to close us out because he had an engagement, but he wanted to express the sentiments of everyone having a happy Bermuda Day. He hopes that everyone has an enjoyable day, use it as for opportunity of camaraderie and sharing the best of who we are on that particular day.

I think we did all the sentiments of the Opposition Leader who has an expectation of that day being a joyous day and one that we can collectively celebrate together. I know that, for me, it is an important date in my calendar. You know, the people from the East and the West, their day is Cup Match. But for us in the city . . . I may not be able to get a spot around St. George's Field or Somerset Field, but I definitely have a spot in town. And so, I use that day to wake up early, set up my camp and have a full day with my family and friends. And I am wishing everybody a prosperous day. For those persons who are participating, certainly we will be there to applaud you as you come through. And I just think that we approach the day with the appropriate spirit, one of togetherness and unity.

*[Desk thumping]*

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** Mr. Speaker, those were the remarks that the Premier wanted me to express.

*[Laughter]*

**The Speaker:** So, whose camp? Your camp or his camp?

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** But certainly—

**The Speaker:** I am only teasing you—

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** My camp. But I want to do a strategic pivot right now in terms of the fact that—

**The Speaker:** [INAUDIBLE]

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** I was going to speak today about the lost opportunity for us to collectively come together and talk about the positive ratings that Bermuda has actually achieved. And there will be some time for us to speak about the positive ratings and how that trickled on into the everyday household, because there is a connection. And I believe that you cannot detach the two in terms of the work that the Government is

doing, the financial position, the assessment of economic plans moving forward, and how that actually would then benefit the people of Bermuda. And so there is going to be an opportunity to do so.

But today I really want to, and I do not know how to approach this. I want to be guided. If a Member of Parliament, especially a Minister, deliberately and knowingly lies to Members of Parliament and lies in this House, that could result in that person being asked to resign from their position, correct?

**The Speaker:** There is a Ministerial [Code of] Conduct, rules that dictate how Members should conduct themselves. And I think if a Member, any Member, but particularly a Minister, brings a known untruth (put it that way), and misleads the Household with that untruth, yes, that is a serious offence.

### MALICIOUS RUMOURS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Hon. Jason Hayward:** Thank you.

On January 21st, I received a forward. It reads, "So they tell me Jason Hayward's wife has left him due to abuse. His girlfriend before this one left him too for the same reason. He is an abuser of women and cannot keep his hands to himself, making decisions about the country because of family connections in the PLP."

I then put my hand forward to challenge the Leadership of the Party.

A voice message was then sent out. In that message, it articulated the same thing, that Jason Hayward is a woman beater and he has a police record to support it. That is an unsubstantiated, malicious rumour.

Everybody I have talked to about it says, *Hayward, do not address it. Let it go away.* But they don't have to live what I have to live.

Mr. Speaker, I wake up every morning and try to do my best for the people of this country. I have dedicated 22 years of my life to public service and helping people, and serving people, and helping communities. And for whatever reason, evil within our community would determine that they are hell bound on destroying my character. I have never engaged in domestic violence. I am not a woman beater, and I have never abused a woman. And it is sad that I have to say that. Even after saying that, half the country is not going to believe what is actually being said.

So here is the reality, Mr. Speaker. If anybody comes with any evidence, a police report, a medical report, a doctor's report, an individual who I have been in a relationship with in the past, if they come forward and say that I engaged in domestic violence, I will resign from Parliament immediately. If they bring the information to you, Mr. Speaker, I am asking you to remove me from this House for lying to the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes in life, things are more than politics. I am here to protect my own integrity. It even hurts me more that Members of this House will

continue to spread that rumour without even trying to determine whether or not there was truth to it.

Mr. Speaker, they tell me, and I understand, that politics is a dirty game. I understand that. I put myself forward to be a candidate for the leadership of this country. I did not expect to endure this. But people say that I should continue to expect more. Well, as long as mistruths are said about my name, I will continue to defend myself. I am not expecting the world to defend me, but I will defend myself. It is wrong. It is unfortunate that I have to go through this. But so be it. And this journey will make me stronger. And I won't be deterred by the negativity that people have to spew. But if I stand in this House and I tell women that I am an ally as it pertains to domestic violence, I simply cannot stand here and be a perpetrator as well. That is not part of my character.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with those few words, I want to conclude. But I am serious. If any evidence is brought forward that I engaged in any of those activities, I will resign my position as a Member of Parliament.

With those words, Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do adjourn to May 29th, 2026.

**The Speaker:** Actually, actually, let me just take a minute.

Take a seat for a minute.

Minister, even though the Premier had actually read the comments for you, the person who moved the motion is the one who closes it.

So, we will close if no other speaker, in a sense. So, I have to ask if there are any other speakers. Had you opened it knowing he would not come here, you could have closed it. But I have to do the due process.

The due process is, are there any Members who wish to speak?

There are no other Members to speak.

With that, now I will adjourn the House. The House will stand adjourned until the 29th of May.

Before I hit the gavel, I just want to add my sentiments to those that have been expressed about the up-and-coming holiday. We know what Bermuda Day means to all of us. A good time to relax and celebrate, enjoy the camaraderie of Bermudians and our guests in the country. But it is also a time for us to always practice safety. And when I say safety, I speak mainly to the roads, because it does not make celebrating during the day and overindulging and then trying to drive home that night and injure yourself or others.

So be cautious, be careful. As the Opposition Leader was saying, if we notice one of our friends or family members who seems to have had a bit too much, don't encourage them to drive. Take the keys from them. Give them a ride home. We want everybody to enjoy it without any negativity of having to be injured through unnecessary acts of driving on our roads when they are intoxicated.

But not only that, if at any time we see any violence that may take place, anybody getting heated, let us try and just bring the temperature down around us and those around so that everyone can go home feeling like this was a very fun and enjoyable time with their family and friends. And no acts of unnecessary acts taking place that should not have been part of our Bermuda Day celebration.

With that, I encourage everyone to enjoy the holiday. Those who are running, as one who's run many times in the past, I know what it means. I hope they all have a good day on that race and encourage us to encourage our runners when we see them come by. Not only the senior runners in the Somerset Taunton, but as one who sponsors the junior race, I encourage us all to encourage our young people who do the last two miles into Hamilton Peace Park as well.

With that said, have a very merry . . . is it merry? Very enjoyable (I think the wrong season) holiday of Bermuda Day.

The House now stands adjourned.

*[At 5:53 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 29 May 2026.]*