



2024/25 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA SENATE

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT

4 DECEMBER 2024

Sitting number 3 of the 2024/2025 Session
(pages 45–68)

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

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**BERMUDA SENATE
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10:02 AM

Sitting Number 3 of the 2024/2025 Session

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

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

PRAYERS

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

The President: Please be seated.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 27 November 2024]

The President: Vice President Kiernan Bell, you have the floor.

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Thank you, Madam President.
Madam President, I move that the Minutes of the meeting of Wednesday, the 27th of November 2024, be taken as read.

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

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Madam President, I move that the Minutes of Wednesday—

The President: Hold on. Pardon. Somebody has an objection.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Yes. Sorry, Madam President.

The President: Senator Tucker, yes.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you. Good morning.
I simply just wanted to point out a typo in the first paragraph of Senator Johnson's name. That is all.
Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Duly noted.
Carry on.

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Madam President, subject to that amendment, I move that the Minutes of Wednesday, the 27th of November 2024, be confirmed.

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

[Minutes of 27 November 2024 confirmed]

The President: Thank you, Senator Kiernan Bell, Vice President.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

SENATE VISITOR

The President: Before we move on, I would just like to acknowledge and welcome in the Gallery the Honourable Wayne Furbert.
Welcome to you, sir.

MESSAGES

The President: Mrs. Beale.

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

The President: Thank you.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The President: There are none.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

APOLOGY

The President: Senators, I would just like to announce that we have apologies from Senator Fubler, who is abroad on business for his firm.

The next item is the announcement of Honourable Owen Darrell on the closure of schools, education.
Minister Darrell, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President. Good morning.

The President: Good morning.

EDUCATION (CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS) ORDER 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, I hereby present for the information of Senate the Education (Closure of Schools) Order 2024 as made by the Minister responsible for Education in exercise of the power conferred by section 6 of the Education Act 1996.

And Senators may access copies of the Order on their tablets and/or the parliamentary website.

The President: Thank you, Minister. And you have other announcements; you can continue.

EDUCATION (PRIMARY SCHOOLS) (IMPLEMENTATION OF REFORMS) ORDER 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I hereby present for the information of the Senate the Education (Primary Schools) (Implementation of Reforms) Order 2024 as made by the Minister responsible for Education in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Education (Primary Schools) Temporary Act 2023.

Again, Madam President, Senators may access copies of the Order on their tablets and/or the parliamentary website.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell. And you may continue with your next announcement.

BERMUDA COLLEGE AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, I hereby present for the information of Senate the Bermuda College Audited Financial Statement for the year ended 31 March 2024.

And Senators may access copies of the statement on their tablets and/or the parliamentary website.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

I think the next announcement is in the name of Senator the Honourable Owen Darrell again. The last announcement.

REPORT OF THE JOINT WORLD HERITAGE CENTRE/ICOMOS ADVISORY MISSION TO THE HISTORIC TOWN OF ST. GEORGE'S AND RELATED FORTIFICATIONS, BERMUDA (UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND) 25–28 MARCH 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

I hereby present for the information of Senate the Report of the Joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Advisory Mission to the Historic Town of St. George's and Related Fortifications, Bermuda (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) [25–28 March 2024].

Madam President, Senators may access copies of the report on their tablets and/or parliamentary website.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.
Moving on with our agenda.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The President: The first motion is also in the name of Minister Darrell. And that is the Tourism Investment [draft Order].

TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEDON HOTEL) ORDER 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

I hereby present for the consideration of Senate the Tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, together with the written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017. And I give notice that at a later point in the meeting, I will move that said draft Order be approved.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.
We can move on, yes, to your second.

TOURISM INVESTMENT (SWAN PYROTECHNICS LIMITED) ORDER 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

I hereby present for the consideration of the Senate the Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, together with the written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017. And I give notice that at a later point in the meeting, I will move that said draft Order be approved.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.
Moving on to the next item.

PETITIONS

The President: There are none.

STATEMENTS

The President: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The President: There are none.

FIRST READING OF PUBLIC BILLS

BILLS

FIRST READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2024 (GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATION SIGNIFIED)

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF BENEFITS AND VALIDATION) ACT 2024

PUBLIC ACCESS TO INFORMATION AMENDMENT ACT 2024

The President: The following Public Bills have been received from the Honourable House of Assembly and are now read for the first time: Their titles are, respectively, the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 (Governor's recommendation signified); the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits and Validation) Act 2024; and the last is the Public Access to Information Amendment Act 2024.

And, Senators, I have been advised that that particular item will not be raised today. We will be carrying it over.

FIRST READING OF PRIVATE BILLS

The President: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The President: There are no questions to be raised today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The President: The first Order of the Day is the consideration of the tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

SENATE VISITOR

The President: And before the Minister presents his [draft Order], I would just like to acknowledge the

presence of Pandora Glasford, the Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports.

Welcome to you.

The President: Minister, when you are ready, you can proceed.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 71(2)

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, Thank you very much.

Madam President, I move that Standing Order 71(2) be suspended so that the Senate may now proceed with the consideration of the Tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024.

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

[Motion carried: Standing Order 71(2) suspended.]

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, I move that Senate do now take under consideration the Tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, together with written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

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

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEDON HOTEL) ORDER 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, the purpose of bringing this Tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024 before the Senate is to enable the grant of tourism investment relief to the developers of the tourism product, the Rosedon Hotel, which is in the national economic interest of Bermuda.

Madam President, I am pleased to invite this Honourable Senate to take this [draft] Order under consideration. Madam President, the application for a Tourism Investment Order was submitted by Rosedon Limited, the developer, in respect to the renovation of the Rosedon Hotel, located on 61 Pitts Bay Road, Pembroke, Hamilton. The joint stock company called Rosedon Limited was incorporated by an Act of the Legislature in 1958, namely, the Rosedon Company Act 1958.

Madam President, the Rosedon was purchased from the Brown estate by Geoffrey Kitson, JP, RN, OBE, and his wife Elizabeth "Betty" Kitson, MBE,

in 1954. The home was first opened as a small bed and breakfast, and it was operated as such, Madam President. A small pool was built in the back garden area along with 15 guest rooms. The basement of the main house was converted into housekeeping. The main kitchen was used to serve breakfast and traditional tea to their guests.

Madam President, the hotel is now owned and operated by Scott Kitson, the grandson of Geoffrey and Betty. Madam President, over the last seven years, the Kitson family has invested millions of dollars into the hotel property. Between 2017 and 2023, the main house was extensively renovated in tandem with the introduction of the renowned Huckleberry [Brasserie] restaurant. A state-of-the-art kitchen was installed, and upgrades were made to Beau's Bar in the front veranda. The upper floor was converted into a large, elegant events space named the Crystal Room. The pool area was renovated to include a 40-foot covered pergola, a private cabana and new pool furniture.

Madam President, upgrades to the hotel continued between 2018 and 2023. During this time the gardens originally designed by Betty Kitson were redesigned into several outdoor, tiered living rooms by family members Lee, Judy and Scott. In support of the farm-to-table practice of Rosedon Hotel, the gardens feature Bermuda banana trees, citrus trees and birds of paradise, to name a few. Madam President, following a two-year closure due to COVID-19, the hotel reopened in November 2022 with 10 rooms. A full reopening was held in February of 2023.

Madam President, Rosedon Limited plans to fully renovate all 27 bedrooms and to develop new food and beverage options to include Clarabell's, a pizzeria on the front lawn and poolside. You like that, right?

[Laughter]

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: You like that.

A bar to host events around the pool, and Scott's, a fine dining restaurant will be open to run alongside Huckleberry, the all-day Brasserie restaurant.

Madam President, the schedule of renovations, estimated to cost between \$2 million and \$3 million, began in August 2024 and will be completed in the winter of 2025/26. Madam President, the Rosedon Hotel currently employs 50 people, 54 per cent of whom are Bermudian. The employment projection for 2025 is 75, and for 2026 and beyond, 90 employees, 70 per cent of whom must be Bermudian.

Madam President, Rosedon Hotel has established timelines by which employees of the hotel will be promoted. These timelines include but are not limited to the following: from kitchen porter to chef within one year; from server to captain within two years; from housekeeping supervisor to head housekeeper within three years. Madam President, in addition to several training programmes, Rosedon Limited has introduced

flexible working hours for its employees and will allocate \$25,000 toward external training programmes to all managers.

Madam President, Senators will note that the Rosedon Hotel has been awarded the following terms of relief allowed by the legislation:

- full relief from customs duty for 15 years from the operative date of the Order;
- full relief from hotel occupancy tax for 15 years from the hotel's opening date;
- full relief from the employee's share of payroll tax for 15 years from the hotel's opening date; and
- full exemption from land tax for 10 years starting from the sixth anniversary of the hotel's opening date.

Madam President, Senators will note that exemption from land tax is subject to the hotel's confirming in years six through eleven that 70 per cent of the hotel staff must be Bermudian. Further, Madam President, exemption from the employer's share of the payroll tax is subject to [the condition that] management training programmes for Bermudians, verified by the Department of Workforce Development, is in operation at the hotel. Madam President, the aforementioned renovation schedule of the Rosedon Hotel is a testament to the confidence that the Kitson family has in the hospitality industry here in Bermuda. The employment, training and promotion of Bermudians at this property stands as a shining example for other hotel properties. Indeed, it serves as a beacon to potential investors looking to participate in our local product.

Madam President, I am pleased to commend this [draft] Order for support for this Honourable Senate.

Thank you, Madam President.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

APOLOGY

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

And, Senators, before I open the floor to you all, I just want to announce that I have just been advised that OBA Senator Dr. Douglas De Couto is away on business and therefore is not with us this morning.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEDON HOTEL) ORDER 2024

[Continuation thereof]

The President: Back to the [draft Order] now.

Would any Senator care to speak?
Senator Dwayne Robinson, you have the floor.

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam President. And it is always good to start off the speech with the OBA's support. We do support this investment Order, and we support anything that will stimulate the economy and support the growth of our tourism product.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: It is on record; it is on record.

And we also do especially encourage the management training aspect of this particular [draft] Order (and the Orders that have preceded it) and think that it is an excellent way to entice Bermudians to return into hospitality and see it as a potential career path.

So naturally, we do have concerns about the full 15-year concessions granted and would just invite the Minister to provide a bit more clarity as to the full 15 being granted. We had stated that this may become the norm, and it does put extra strain on government coffers and government income. So naturally, we just want to hear just a little bit more about that.

There is also just a brief concern with the opening of the Fairmont, which we all celebrate and are all happy about, that that is on record as well. You may have a bit of a battle for workers, right, especially locals and Bermudians who will now have a massive hotel to work in. So, this 70 per cent hotel staff who are Bermudian, I agree with. But I just want to hear a little bit from the Minister as to how we may entice more Bermudians to get involved and the Government's plans to make sure that every hotel can meet that 70 per cent Bermudian threshold with the opening of Fairmont Southampton.

So, with that, we support this [draft Order] and congratulate the Minister on his investment Order.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Robinson.

Would any other Senator care to speak on this?

Senator Tucker, OBA Leader in the Senator, you have the floor.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam President.

I was not going to speak. I actually just have a question because the promotion timelines and all that was talked about in terms of the training. And particularly that promotion timeline I think is fantastic. I think that it would be great if that could also be part of any future Orders, you know, any future pieces of legislation that are coming through, similar. And that obviously will ensure that Bermudians are not overlooked and that they are trained and promoted through the ranks as well because of that commitment.

My question is, When does the annual reporting period actually commence? So that is the only question I have.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Tucker.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Senator John Wight, you have the floor.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam President. I will not add anything other than what my colleagues have already expressed, but I support this [draft Order] as well.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Wight.

Vice President Kiernan Bell, you have the floor.

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Thank you, Madam President.

Just to say yes, I do support the [draft Order].

My only question mark remains around the 70 per cent Bermudian employee requirement and whether or not the hotelier will be able to establish, if it is unable to meet that criteria, has it done everything it reasonably can to meet it?

Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Vice President Kiernan Bell.

Would any other Senator care to speak on the [draft Order]?

Hearing none, back to you, Minister Darrell.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you. Thank you to the Senators from across the aisle as well as the Independent Senators for their support of this. I think we all understand how important this is, as we know the Bermuda Government's responsibility is to seek further hotel investment.

The President: Mm-hmm.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: And I would be remiss if I did not sit here, and everybody can see, the challenge that we have had with getting new hotels up and running. And some of that is due to global costs. And obviously when you are investing in a product of this magnitude, individuals who are investing are looking for returns. So, with the reopening of Fairmont Southampton, I think it is well documented, even when we brought this Tourism Investment Act into place in 2017, the economic benefit that investment in the tourism product and investing in hotels will have on the entire country.

We talk now even locally, outside of tourism, but locally as far as flights coming to Bermuda, they are so expensive because there are so few of them. And the reason there are so few flights is because there are a limited number of beds in Bermuda. So that alone has a knock-on effect to locals and their everyday lives.

There are individuals who are choosing not to go into hospitality because the hours and the time that they are going to be able to work fluctuate based on the availability of tourists at certain hotels. So, if we are investing in this . . . and that is why it is important.

I know the Senator asked about 15 years and why 15? And it has been documented when we discussed this in other times. We are competing globally with getting the attention of hotel investors worldwide. And I know we are here to debate matters relating to Bermuda. But when I travel to CTO [Caribbean Tourism Organization] conferences and I meet with other Ministers of Tourism around the Caribbean, it is competitive. And investors will choose to go to other jurisdictions that are offering, you know, 25- 20-year concessions for hotels to be built. Because they see the value that this will bring in their overall economic impact for their country.

So, this is something that the Government has stood by. It is something that the Government will continue to stand by. And as we have seen, with these come . . . there are hotel developments that are happening. There are very large-scale renovations that are happening. There are multiple hotels, and we have come here and we have named them, that are taking this relief and they are putting it to good use. And you see Bermudians who are moving back into the hospitality industry.

One of the questions and concerns was about the 70 per cent employment. And it was a good point made by the Senator regarding, once you do have more hotels, you are going to get more competitive amongst the hoteliers for local workers. And let us start with this. I mean, if you are a hard-working Bermudian in the hotel industry, you will get noticed. I do not have his last name, but I think most people know him, the young man whom I had the opportunity to teach many, many years ago. His name is Gary. Gary has been working in the hospitality industry up in Fairmont Southampton for years. And even throughout its closure, he was able to adapt and move and work in different areas of the hotel, the restaurant that is still open up there and the like.

So that bodes well for Bermudians like Gary who are looking to make a career out of it. And people will be bidding for the top talent in Bermuda. But what that also means is that there are opportunities for Bermudians to get into hospitality once again. Coming next year, if you have been following the education reform, I know a lot of people like all of the theatrics that come with it. But if you really are focusing on the plans and what is going on, there is a Signature School opening that will focus on hospitality management this next coming school year. And that is up at Sandys. And that answers the question as to what this Government is doing to bring along young people and show them that hospitality is once again going to be a viable option for . . . and I will say this. My son . . . I talk about my grandparents, how they made their living, all of them, in the

hospitality industry, whether it was my grandfather who was a bartender, whether it was my grandmother who was a chamber maid at one time and many of her sisters. Whether it be my other grandmother who was a taxi driver, whether it be my grandfather on my mom's side who opened a restaurant. That was how they made their living in this country. And it bodes very well for the signatures that are opening up.

Also, I have to give a shout-out to the Bermuda Tourism Authority. The Bermuda Tourism Authority, if you have seen, has been advertising their Anchor[BDA] programme. Their AnchorBDA programme gets into the community and gets people trained up as to what it would look like to be in the hospitality industry. And once you get that basic knowledge, you can then get into deeper courses to specialise in wherever you want to go. I have had the opportunity to partner along with the Bermuda Tourism Authority in schools to speak to middle school students about the importance of hospitality.

And in years gone by, the Director of Workforce Development—a little shout-out to her, Ms. Malika Cartwright—spent her time at the Bermuda Hospitality Institute of which I was a volunteer, where we used to go into schools. And we used to have a curriculum done by Ms. Karen Edwards (at the time) to teach primary school and middle school students the vast array and variety of jobs that are in there. So, once we open the signature and we get back to these programmes, I think once again tourism in Bermuda will be a viable option for young people. And I do not think that these hotels, which are mandated to find 70 per cent locals, will have problems. I do not think that they will have problems finding local talent to go back into the hospitality workforce.

So, I think the question was, When does the annual reporting period commence? I do not have an answer on that, but I can seek to get that and provide it at a later time, Madam President. This hotel has a great relationship with Government. And they will inform us if they are having difficulty meeting their goals. And their investment in training is testament to their efforts to achieve these targets. So, it is not just something that these hotels are doing to tick the box. It is something that actually improves their product. When you see Bermudians working and you get that *people feel* . . . Because if you do any survey about tourism in this country, they will tell you that the number-one feature of Bermuda is its people and the culture that comes with it.

So, Madam President, I hope I have answered most of the questions. I do once again appreciate the support. And I know the Kitsons and the principals over at the Rosedon are very eager, as are most hotels, for this process to be behind them so that they can then fully invest in improving the hotel product. And I know . . . not to get into our next debate, but it touches on the Tourism Investment Act as well and to show what we are doing and how serious we are about tourism in this country.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.
Yes, Senator Tucker, you have—

Sen. Robin Tucker: —May I ask?

The President: —a follow-up question?

Sen. Robin Tucker: Yes, please. Thank you to the Minister for his response.

I guess what I really want to touch on is the fact that there is quite some confidence that was sort of promoted that the hotels will be able to find the 70 per cent of Bermudian employees. And while I think that the Signature School for Hospitality is great, that is also a little way down the road. They have got to get through school. Then they have got to be introduced to the workplace and all of those types of things. So, I just wondered whether there were any other types of initiatives that the Ministry was looking at to help to promote hospitality to Bermudians to try to make sure that the hospitality industry is adequately staffed (I will say)?

And I say that from my own personal experience. I spent five years of HR [Human Resources] at Mid Ocean. So, I know how difficult it is to actually attract Bermudians to the hospitality industry. And certainly not just attracting them but retaining them. So, my question is, Is anything else being done? I mean, are there plans for more hospitality fairs? Are there plans for more going out in the community and promoting hospitality in a more (I do not want to say *aggressive*, but for lack of a better term, a more aggressive) type of a way? Because once upon a time, that was a very attractive employment opportunity. But obviously things have shifted over the years.

And that is why the question that I asked about that reporting period is important. And Senator Bell had asked if the hoteliers are unable to meet that requirement, is there going to be any sort of update as to why that is? It is important, obviously to everybody in the room, that Bermudians are able to find employment and to make sure that we are able to promote our tourism product. I wondered because that is a very important piece, obviously, staffing the hotels.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Robin Tucker.
Minister, yes, it is over to you.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

I thought that I mentioned the very close relationship of the Director of Workforce Development, Ms. Malika Cartright, and the work that Workforce Development is also doing. And Workforce Development are dealing with adults in the community who are seeking employment. They are seeking training to get themselves in a better position for employment. And they are

doing a lot of great work. You know, as I know Senator Tucker does some canvassing, when people come looking for jobs, I know she sends them to Workforce Development, as we all should.

And I had a very nice message from a young man the other day who said to me, *Thank you very much for connecting me with Workforce Development*. They were able to assist him. They were able to sharpen some of his skills. And he is confident that he is able to get back into the workforce. So that was an example that I think I did mention. I think I mentioned the Anchor[BDA] programme as well that is being run by the Bermuda Tourism Authority.

And I know the Senator knows quite well that many of the human resource managers in these hotels . . . There is a young lady, and I am getting her name right now, but she is doing quite well down at the St. Regis. (Her name begins with an M. That is as far as I got right now.)

[Inaudible interjections]

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you. Misha, yes. Thank you.

That young lady is doing quite well. The last time I was down at St. Regis earlier in the year, she was organising a career fair. And it was larger than she had expected. So, they are still having these. Workforce Development is still doing stuff. So, we are confident that we are getting Bermudians trained to go into what has proven to be in recent years a difficult industry.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister.

With no further questions, you can move your [draft Order].

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that the following message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor:

May it please Your Excellency:

The Senate, having had under consideration the draft Order entitled the Tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024, as made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, together with the written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, has the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Senate has approved the said draft Order.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister.

[There is] no objection to the message being sent.

[Motion carried: The Tourism Investment (Rosedon Hotel) Order 2024 was approved.]

The President: Thank you, Senators, for your participation in that.

Moving on, the second Order of the Day is the consideration of the Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024, and that is also in the name of the Honourable Owen Darrell, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Minister, when you are ready you can present your [draft Order].

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 71(2)

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, thank you.

I move that Standing Order 71(2) be suspended so the Senate may now proceed with the consideration of the Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024.

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

[Motion carried: Standing Order 71(2) suspended.]

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, I move that the Senate do now take under consideration the Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024, proposed to be made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, together with the written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017.

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

DRAFT ORDER

TOURISM INVESTMENT (SWAN PYROTECHNICS LIMITED) ORDER 2024

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, the purpose of bringing this Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024 before the Senate is to enable the grant of customs duty relief to the operators of Swan Pyrotechnics Limited, a Bermuda-incorporated company that provides pyrotechnic displays at local and tourism events. Swan Pyrotechnics Limited was deemed to be a tourism project that is in the national economic interest of Bermuda by the Minister responsible for Tourism and agreed in writing by the Minister of Finance under the Tourism Investment Act 2017. Madam President, I am pleased to invite Senators to take this draft Order under consideration.

Madam President, the application for a Tourism Investment Order was submitted by Swan Pyrotechnics Limited, which is described as a *tourist attraction*. Madam President, Swan Pyrotechnics Limited is a professional entertainment company specialising in safe and high-quality pyrotechnic displays for local and tourism events. Swan Pyrotechnics Limited is owned and managed by Mr. Kyle Swan and was incorporated on March 6, 2019. Madam President, Swan Pyrotechnics Limited's services range from traditional fireworks displays (as we saw on Sunday evening) to pyromusicals, which incorporate special effects, close proximity effects and advanced pyrotechnic features.

Kyle Swan brings a safety-minded and sensible approach to Swan Pyrotechnics Limited's operations. He has invested in the top-of-the-line industry-leading equipment, which guarantees the safest possible application of fireworks in any setting. An environmentally conscious approach includes a series of techniques and methods which vastly limit the environmental impact of the displays.

Madam President, additionally, Swan Pyrotechnics Limited has created memorable experiences for organisations, including the Bermuda Hotel Association, the Corporations of Hamilton and St. George's, and events such as the Christmas and Boat parades, Harbour Nights and the annual Heritage Day Parade.

Madam President, Swan Pyrotechnics Limited projects that the Bermuda market will provide sufficient opportunity for between 10 to 15 shows annually, charging a minimum of \$3,500 per minute. Madam President, Senators will note that Swan Pyrotechnics Limited is seeking to be granted full relief from customs duty for a period not exceeding five years from the operative date of the Tourism Investment Order in respect of any equipment, goods and supplies which are necessary for the operation of the tourist attraction.

Madam President, this is the first application for a Tourism Investment Order for an attraction, an attraction which will undoubtedly continue to enhance our tourism product here in Bermuda. I commend Mr. Swan, a Bermudian entrepreneur, for applying to become the first recipient, Madam President, of a tax concession for a tourist attraction.

Madam President, I am pleased to commend this [draft] Order for support of the Senate.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

Would any Senator care to speak on this [draft] Order?

Senator Robinson, you have the floor.

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam President. And I have to say the Honourable Minister is on a good wicket this session.

[Laughter]

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: These pyrotechnics and fireworks are something that many Bermudians have been asking for for some time. And it is a particular thing that many from the older generation remember fondly as being part of our tourism tapestry. So, to see that it is now coming back I think makes a lot of us very happy. And I think that Bermudians have also said that there is a need for more attractions in our local tourism product, more things for tourists to do, more things for locals to participate in.

I think that this is a good step in the right direction to provide more attractions, to provide more things and enhance Bermuda as a more attractive destination for different types of tourists. Because obviously we want to expand not just the tourism season to make it longer and hopefully year-round. But we want to provide many different recreational things for people to do. So, I think that this is a great initiative. And it has our support.

I would like to ask the Minister if there will be any potential for a bit of a . . . I want to say a media campaign or a bit of a community campaign to encourage a [few] more attractions to come up from our locals and encourage the entrepreneurial spirit now that this has been made available. Well, not made available, but now that someone has taken advantage of what was made available.

So that will probably be my only comment, and you have our support.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Dwayne Robinson.

Senator John Wight, you have the floor.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam President.

I often support Bills that provide tax relief for hotels, and other proposals that I believe are in the best interest of Bermuda's economy such as the Rosedon Hotel Order that the Senators just approved just a few minutes ago.

I will not oppose this [draft Order], but I have a hard time understanding how full relief is provided on the basis of the attraction, in this case pyrotechnics, in the national economic interest of Bermuda. This seems to be a stretch for me. I could see other like attractions in Bermuda wondering why or if they can in future be provided with similar relief. So again, I will not oppose it, but I just have a hard time seeing this being in the national economic interest of Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator John Wight.

Would any other Senator care to speak on this Bill?

Senator Kiernan Bell, Vice President, you have the floor.

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Thank you, Madam President.

First of all, can I say I love fireworks. So, I support this. I do support this [draft Order] but not just because I support fireworks. And I do have a question for the Minister. The question really involves, only because I went and had a look. And I was struggling to find it, and maybe I just missed it. But is there any guidance that is issued for entrepreneurs who wish to create attractions in Bermuda as to how they go about it? I know there is information about . . . And it is mostly focused at restaurants and hotels, and businesses of that like. But clearly the Government's policy is to include attractions to make Bermuda more attractive as a tourism product for people to come. And I can see the public policy benefits that go along with that.

So, the question is, How, if you are a young entrepreneur or even an older entrepreneur in Bermuda and you wish to have a business which is going to invest in something which is going to be a clear tourism attraction . . . For example, I can think of dive shops, for example, who have to pay for equipment and boats and things like that in order to cater to that and provide that tourism product. And there is a host of others that one can imagine. How do they realise and follow this path and seek to have the benefit so that they can remove those barriers to entry in terms of cost and make that investment to create an attraction for Bermuda tourism?

So that is my question. But I do support this [draft] Order. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Senator Kiernan Bell, Vice President.

Would any other Senator care to speak on this [draft Order]?

Hearing none . . . Oh, sorry.

Senator Wilkerson, Attorney General, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you very much, Madam President.

I do want to signal my support. Clearly it is a Government [draft Order]; we support it. But particularly, and I believe Senator Wight has mentioned general support of these kinds of concessions when it is a hotel. And it clear to see, for example a restaurant, how that is in the national interest, so to speak. And I think that that has been something that Bermudian entrepreneurs have had an issue with. And when we say, *You may be a small business against a large business*, and people might recall that previously, prior to Mr. Swan's business, when you saw a fireworks display, it would normally be something that was promoted via a hotel.

The President: Mm-hmm.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: So, they were still getting the benefit of this in the context of their being a large business. And what the Government is striving to do here is to create some equity for smaller businesses

that also add to the tourism product. And I completely disagree that because it is an attraction and it is fireworks, it is not in the national interest. I think the point is that all of these small things add together to add to a rich experience for tourists and for Bermudians alike when it comes to attractions. And that is why I think this is very, very important.

I hear the Vice President's comment about, how is it clear that there is a path of availability for other entrepreneurs? And I think that is the beauty of highlighting this experience for Swan Pyrotechnics. It can show that this is available for other entrepreneurs and that this Government is serious about levelling the playing field and creating some equity around opportunity.

And let me say, personally I know Mr. Swan. His mother is a friend of mine. He is professional. He is a trained EMT. He has had lots of experience of building his practice around this business and safety while he worked and lived in the United States. And he is a Bermudian who has chosen to come home. And we hear in this Chamber very often about all of the Bermudians who go away. They build experience, and they do not return. And he has returned. And that is why he is a double example of what can happen when we support Bermudian entrepreneurs.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Attorney General Wilkerson.

Senator Hodgson, you have indicated you wanted to speak on this [draft Order]. You have the floor.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Yes. Thank you, Madam President.

I did want to speak and contribute my support. Like Senator Bell, we are a family who loves fireworks. We are a family who loves a good holiday. We love the opportunity to gather, not just as a family, but as a community and to celebrate our unique culture and heritage. And when I think about it, the Christmas parade and the Boat parade, fireworks is something that is part of every one of those memories. And I know that for the years that there was not an option to have the fireworks as part of our experience, it was something I think that was sorely missed.

On Monday when I was rolled out, TNN's Trevor Lindsay had asked about young men and about what is there for them. And while this is not directly intended to benefit young men, I think it is an example of the opportunities that do exist and the opportunities that continue to [be provided to] us through this Government. And to Senator Tucker's point . . . no, Senator Bell's point. (Sorry.) I think we can see more examples of how we can collaborate better as a Government. You know, we are coming to the end of a fiscal year, and that means that we have to make sure that monies that were allocated are accounted for and have been spent appropriately. And in many instances, we recognise

that there are more opportunities to do more for our people, whether that is supporting them directly or their businesses and other ventures.

And so again I do support this [draft] Order. You know, I think about the fact that it is not just about big hotel developers who should be able to take advantage of these opportunities. Every day Bermudians should also have the know-how. I do like the idea of making sure that persons are better informed about how to take advantage of these opportunities. And I am sure that the Minister will start to have more of those conversations and get those wheels turning so that the public is better informed.

Again, yes, definitely happy to lend my support.

The President: Thank you, Senator Hodgson.

Would any other Senator care to speak on this [draft Order]?

Hearing none, then, Minister Darrell, it is back to you.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

And I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Senators.

Senator Robinson, thank you for your comments. And to that point, this is something that you are going to see us in the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport promoting a lot more. This has been sitting in the Tourism Investment Act for quite some time.

And to the point of Senator Bell, many individuals, entrepreneurs who are currently operating have been eligible for this since it was put in there. And they just have not taken advantage of it. You know, in having a conversation with a young person recently, they took me to task and said, *Listen. The Government is doing amazing stuff. But we don't know about it. Where do I go to find it?* And that is a conversation, as Senator Hodgson did say, I will be taking internally. And we will be looking and saying, *Well, how do we amplify this?*

Because what Mr. Swan has done . . . and let us go back. Anybody who works in multiple pieces or levels of government has seen the correspondence from Mr. Swan as an entrepreneur and the struggles and difficulty that he had to go through to get his business legitimate and for people to take him seriously, because there were so many different hurdles. And we are happy that he has gone through the process of applying for this attraction and this Tourism Investment Order that comes under the Act, under the thing of attractions.

And we do. We are trying to encourage more individuals to apply for this. And I am not going to give away any entrepreneur's ideas, but there are a lot of individuals who come with ideas and people who have business plans that are sitting somewhere. And they say, *Well, how do I get this off the ground?* And the first step would be to contact the Ministry of Tourism,

Culture and Sport. And we have a whole Regulatory and Policy Unit that will walk you through the process.

And just like there are checks and balances with the other Tourism Investment Orders when it comes to hotels, [they] will walk you through the checks and the different benchmarks and approval processes. And then you will see a success story like this. I mean, Madam President, to see . . . I know Senator Wight was there as well. But to see the joy on Mr. Swan's face on Sunday evening when he actually had the gadget there and all of the children who were there at the parade were gathered around. And he said, *Let's . . . you press this button*. And it looks easy at that point. But the back-story is the [number] of hours and amount of time that he put in to planning this fireworks display.

And we sit there, and everybody has it on their Instagram, and they put it on their pictures and say, *Wow, this was an amazing night!* But that is the perseverance of what Mr. Swan has done and the Government for making these opportunities available. And yes, we want more! Because what people will say on the street is, *Oh, here we go, the Government giving another tax concession to large corporations to build hotels*. But it is a guy like Mr. Swan and others who can benefit just as much.

I want to speak directly to Senator Wight's point as to questioning the impact that this will have from a national importance [perspective]. One of the biggest events that the Bermuda Tourism Authority, through funding from the Bermuda Government, invests in is the golf tournament. The Butterfield Bermuda Championship has been here now in this format I think for seven years. And before that there was a different tournament, the PGA Grand Slam. You would have noticed that this year, probably about a month ago now, a couple of weeks ago, there was a big drone display. Mr. Swan was part of that as well! And I can tell you that there are reports that are done every single year that tell you about the economic impact of people coming to this Island for that particular event. And this was in addition to that event. And to see and hear the people talk about that display!

And there is another one coming. I am not sure if [Mr. Swan] is part of this one. But there is another one coming this weekend for the Boat parade. I think there will be a drone display. But this is an example, and we want to see more of this. And I will gladly accept more and more applications for Tourism Investment Orders under the category of attractions, Madam President. If people are hearing, individuals are hearing this debate and saying, *You know what? This is the push and this is the assistance that I have been looking for to get my business off the road to help boost tourism in this country*.

So, Madam President, I want to say thank you to the Senators who have put their support behind this. Thank you to the Senators who have given examples and real-life examples of how this not only is touching tourism but touching entrepreneurs in this country.

So, Madam President, with that said, I say thank you.

The President: Thank you, Minister.

You can now move your [draft Order].

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam President, I move that the said draft Order be approved and that the following message be sent to Her Excellency the Governor:

May it please Your Excellency,

The Senate, having under consideration the draft Order entitled the Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024, as made by the Minister responsible for Tourism under section 3 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, together with the written agreement of the Minister of Finance in exercise of the power conferred by section 5 of the Tourism Investment Act 2017, has the honour to inform Your Excellency that the Senate has approved the said draft Order.

Thank you, Senators, and thank you, Madam President.

The President: The [message] will be sent, and thank you, Senators, for your support.

[Motion carried: The Tourism Investment (Swan Pyrotechnics Limited) Order 2024 was approved.]

The President: Moving on with our Orders of the Day, item number 3 [second reading of the Public Access to Information Amendment Act 2024], as I had indicated, will be carried over to our next day of meeting.

And item number 4, the second reading of the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 will be undertaken now. And that is in the name of Senator Arianna Hodgson, the spokesperson for Finance.

Senator Hodgson, you have the floor.

STANDING ORDER 25

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I would like to start by moving that the provisions of Standing Order 25 be granted so that I may proceed with the second reading of the Digital Asset Business Amendment Act . . . sorry— the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024.

[Laughter]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Going back to last week.

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

[Motion carried: Leave granted for Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 to be read a second time on the same day as its first reading.]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Then I move that the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 be now read a second time.

The President: Is there any objection to the second reading?

No objection.

BILL

SECOND READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2024

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, the Bill presented today before the Senate is the [Payroll Tax Amendment \(No. 2\) Act 2024](#). The purpose of this Bill is to further harmonise and modernise the public service vehicle industry.

Madam President, it is very important that we embrace efficiency in government tax collection. In our relentless pursuit of excellence, we must never underestimate the transformative power of efficiency. Especially in the realm of government tax collection, streamlining processes can yield profound benefits for both administrators and taxpayers alike.

When we simplify and modernise our tax system, we create an environment that actually fosters transparency and fairness. By reducing complexity and eliminating unnecessary obstacles, we make it easier for individuals and businesses to comply with tax regulations, ultimately enhancing voluntary compliance.

The introduction of clear tiered structures and fixed tax rates is a shining example of how thoughtful reforms can lead to significant improvements. These measures not only reduce the administrative burden on taxpayers, but also allow our Government to allocate resources more effectively, ensuring that public services are well-funded and robust.

Madam President, this is what this Bill does. The Bill introduces a new payroll tax system specifically for minibuses. This revised system will feature a fixed payroll tax structure organised into three tiers based on the seating capacity of the minibus itself.

Under this new framework, owners will no longer be required to engage in complex calculations or reconciliations to determine their payroll tax liability. Also to streamline processes for the owners, the payment of the tax can be made simultaneously during the minibus licensing period.

The new system is structured as follows:

- Tier 1: Minibuses with a seating capacity of up to 15 passengers would incur an annual payroll tax of \$750.
- Tier 2: Minibuses with a seating capacity between 16 and 24 passengers will incur an annual payroll tax of \$1,000.
- Tier 3: Minibuses with a seating capacity of more than 24 passengers will incur an annual payroll tax of \$1,500.

All for a total of an approximate \$221,500 to be collected in revenue as compared to an approximate \$35,000, Madam President.

The introduction of this simplified payroll tax system represents a step forward in improving the efficiency and harmonisation of the tax process within the public service vehicle sector. By establishing a clear tiered structure based on seating capacity, the system removes the need for calculations, thereby facilitating easier compliance with tax regulations for minibus owners. This change not only brings tangible benefits to the operators by simplifying their tax obligation, but it also enhances the overall transparency within the industry.

The tiered approach ensures that the tax requirement is equitably distributed in line with the size of the vehicle, contributing to a more streamlined and efficient public service vehicle sector. This move will undoubtedly create greater compliance and provide clarity for owners whilst we continue to facilitate a more orderly and transparent operating environment across the industry.

Madam President, since we will be charging minibus payroll tax based on seats, we thought it was fair to review what taxi drivers paid, as they also had seat capacity. Madam President, under the previous One Bermuda Alliance Administration, taxi owners faced an average annual payroll tax of \$3,000. In 2019, the Progressive Labour Party took decisive action reducing this tax burden to \$1,000 per year. Now we have taken it a step further by reducing the payroll tax for taxi drivers from \$1,000 to \$600, representing an additional \$400 reduction. Madam President, it is an 80 per cent reduction in payroll tax that taxi drivers will have to pay.

Madam President, this reduction is designed to ease the financial burden on taxi operators and to help create a more balanced and equitable structure within the industry. This comprehensive approach not only improves the operational efficiency of the sector, but also generates a more inclusive and supportive environment for all operators. Ultimately it contributes to the overall enhancement of the public service vehicle industry.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Arianna Hodgson. Would any Senator care to speak on this Bill? Senator Dwayne Robinson, OBA, you have the floor.

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam President. And the Opposition does support any sort of tax relief or tax reform that not only lowers taxes for an entrepreneur such as a taxi operator, but also creates a tax regime for the minibuses.

My question is just along the lines of consultation. There has been a public strain of a relationship between the BTOA [Bermuda Taxi Owners and Operators Association] and the Government. And I just wanted to ask if they were consulted with this particular legislation, because it is a step in the right direction. I am sure taxi drivers will welcome a relief to their payroll tax. However, there have been mentioned other ways that this particular tax could be amended to service the industry a bit more. And I will not proceed anything or speak on behalf of an entire industry. But I do believe that it would be wise for Government to consult and speak with the BTOA as to how some of their recommendations that they have made public can be implemented to make this system (and transport as a whole) better.

With this Bill obviously not being under Transport, I would not expect the Junior Minister to weigh in on it. But I think that they intertwine in a way. So, I also would like to ask what . . . is this one of the steps taken to repair that relationship with the BTOA? Because my concern is that we see a lot of things happening in tourism. And this is a good thing for the Island. And our tourism product is experiencing a boost when it comes to the potential openings and the investments that we see. So, it is very crucial for us to have a transport system for tourists that really works.

So, it is a question of parity here as well. Because you have up to 15 seats for a minibus, and that is only 150 more than a taxi, right? It is just little things to make sure that you are providing equal opportunity for all of the entrepreneurs involved and not skewing in any way. So, I just would like to hear if any consultation was done on this particular Bill, and if anything is coming preceding it that will include some recommendations from the BTOA.

I would like to just also hear a little bit from the Junior Minister on some of the data that were consulted or used to determine that this was the best method to go, as far as the tiers and the particular amounts that are taxed when in comparison to taxi drivers. And also whether or not there are adequate and efficient TCD [Transport Control Department] data available and whether that system is being properly managed, which would be able to inform Government on the comings and the goings of the transport system—taxi drivers and minibuses—and whether or not that was used to inform this particular decision.

And the reason I am asking these particular questions is because there is a sentiment that has been stated publicly by some, and also by the BTOA and others in the industry, that this is an election season. And we have to be honest that it could potentially be perceived as a way to somewhat win back that particular

industry without doing the actual groundwork to really address and implement some of their concerns that they have to effectively enhance their industry and modernise it for the coming times. So, I just want to be sure and give the Junior Minister the opportunity to dissuade that particular idea by letting us know about the going-forward, the collaboration between the BTOA and the industry as a whole.

So, with that, I look forward to hearing the answers. And we support this Bill.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Robinson.

Would any Senator—

Senator John Wight, you have the floor.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam President.

I fully support this Bill. I think it is fair and appropriate. So, I am in full support for it.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you.

Senator Kiernan Bell, Vice President, you have the floor.

Sen. Kiernan Bell: Madam President, I do have some questions on this Bill. My starting position really is that this is a payroll tax amendment Bill. So, it starts with, what is a payroll tax? And in Bermuda, as we know, payroll tax is levied on all employers, self-employed individuals and deemed employees based on remuneration. So, the reason I am struggling with this a little bit is that we are treating a certain portion of our self-employed community and some of our employee community completely differently if they are in the public driving, taxi driver industry. And I struggle with that because the tax system should be equitable and fair not based on what you do but based on the revenue that is derived from that. And we are creating this two-tiered system.

I listened carefully to my colleague, Senator Hodgson, when she was referring to the reasons behind this. And it appeared that the driver was efficiency in tax collections. And if I look back in time to 2018 . . . so this original difference created for taxi drivers was effective the 1st of April 2018, the \$1,000 prepayment (if you like) of payroll tax, which was only for taxi operators. It is not for taxi drivers. And at the time, it was indicated that the reason for that was because such a large portion of the taxi owner/operator/driver community was not actually contributing to the payroll tax system. There were only 411, I think, was the actual statistic that was recounted, if I am permitted to say, in another place by the then Premier, who is the now Premier, who were paying those payroll taxes.

So, this was at the time intended to make sure and fix that through a simplified process so that the taxi owners and operators would pay, prepay \$1,000 payroll tax annually as part of that licensing regime.

Now taking a step back for a moment, the rest of Bermuda pays payroll tax quarterly. Every other employer in Bermuda other than, I think, fishermen and farmers, who are exempted for other public policy reasons (so I will not touch on them for a moment) are required to pay that quarterly payroll tax on what payroll is actually paid. I am sure there are many other employers, self-employed employers in particular in Bermuda, who would appreciate very much the ability to prepay an amount, who might be similarly fixed in a similar type of an income bracket (if I can put it that way) as self-employed. And I can imagine people like self-employed general contractors who provide maintenance who have to pay for truck licences for their trucks (but, you know, they are not making huge sums of money) would very much appreciate to administratively streamline their own businesses and prepay \$600 and prepay all of their payroll taxes.

Similarly, you can imagine people who worked as housekeepers who were self-employed. And there is a host of other types of self-employed people in Bermuda who you can imagine would benefit enormously from having this type of a provision made for them so that they can prepay a capped sum—a capped sum.

So, at the moment, a taxi operator will be paying a capped payroll tax of \$600, if this passes (reduced from \$1,000), which means if any taxi operator makes more than \$52,000, using the payroll tax calculator on the government's website, they are ahead. They are ahead of every other person in Bermuda who earns a similar amount.

And I suppose my question is, Why? Why is that considered appropriate for one industry and not all? And is there any consideration being given to giving optionality to other employers in Bermuda who are in a similar scenario who can prepay and cap their payroll tax liability in this manner? And secondarily, why is it considered appropriate only for taxi drivers and now minibus drivers?

Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Vice President Kiernan Bell.

Would any other Senator care to speak on this Bill?

Senator Tucker, OBA Leader in the Senate, you have the floor.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam President.

I actually only have a point of clarification I am just looking for. I just want to be clear that the minibus operators will have to pay payroll tax on every vehicle that they own. So, if an operator owns five minibuses, [do] they have to pay payroll tax on each of those minibuses? Just as a point of clarification.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Tucker.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Madam President, I just want to start by simply responding to Senator Tucker's question by saying yes. That would be per vehicle.

I also want to take a step back to Senator Robinson's question about consultation to say that of course we have been in constant contact with the Bermuda Taxi Owners and Operators Association. It is a relationship that obviously continues to evolve. We understand the touchpoints that have been contentious in some areas. But I think that as we have seen, we have been able to find some resolution for taxi drivers, taxi operators themselves in terms of increases and some (I guess) reform to what was currently existing.

I can also say that obviously before we bring a piece of legislation to this space, this Bill has gone through analysis. This Bill has gone through drafting and revisions. And so, before we get here of course there is a lot of consultation that takes place. So of course, it is not appropriate to say that this is a matter of an election promise. It is something that we are constantly thinking about as a Government. We have reduced payroll taxes for workers across the board. We have continued to have conversations about how we continued to expand that reduction in payroll tax for those who are warranted.

I would also comment that when we think about the difference in payroll taxes and the variations in different industries, I think it is worth highlighting the fact that there are a combination of economic, social and policy factors that obviously have to be considered as we consider the unique needs and circumstances of each industry. So I cannot speak on behalf of any Minister in terms of the final policy decisions that are made, but I can say that as a Progressive Labour Party Government, payroll taxes and relieving the burdens on workers is something we are always looking to do.

I am just making sure that I covered the points. I appreciated Senator Wight, who believed that bringing amendments was fair and appropriate. So, I want to thank him for his support.

I think that addresses the comments and questions that were made by my colleagues.

And so, Madam President, I would like to move that the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 be now read a second time.

The President: Is there any objection to the second reading?

No objection.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 26

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that Standing Order 26 be suspended in respect of this Bill.

The President: Is there any objection to that?

No objection.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 26 was suspended.]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that the Bill entitled the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 be now read a third time.

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

No objection.

BILL

THIRD READING

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2024

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Then I move that this Bill do now pass.

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

Is there any objection to the [passage] of the Bill?

No objection. The Bill is passed.

[Motion carried: The Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

The President: Thank you, Senator Arianna Hodgson, and thank you, Senators, for your support of this Bill.

We will now move on then. And the next Order of the Day is the second reading of the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits and Validation) Act 2024. And that is also in the name of Senator Arianna Hodgson, the spokesperson for Finance.

Senator Hodgson, you can present your Bill when you are ready.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I move that the Bill entitled the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits and Validation) Act 2024 be now read a second time.

The President: Is there any objection to the second reading?

No objection.

BILL

SECOND READING

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF BENEFITS AND VALIDATION) ACT 2024

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I am pleased to present the [Contributory Pensions \(Amendment of Benefits and Validation\) Act 2024](#) to this Honourable House. This Bill seeks to amend the Contributory Pensions Act 1970 to retroactively validate certain payments made which were calculated on the basis of certain increased rates during the period 16 August 2018 to 15 August 2019.

Madam President, this Bill also seeks to validate the payment of such increase in benefits during that period.

Madam President, the Government has put through six pension increases in its time in Government as part of its promise to put our seniors first and to institute annual cost-of-living increases for social insurance pensions linked to the rate of inflation to help lessen the hardships that too many of our seniors now endure.

Madam President, the House may recall that the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits) Order 2018 was approved in December of 2018, but was not subsequently published in the *Gazette* as is required under the Statutory Instruments Act 1977 and, therefore, did not complete the legislative process.

Madam President, the House should be advised that the Director of Social Insurance implemented the increased rates based on the calculations proposed in the Order. Madam President, you would appreciate our prudence in addressing this misstep to ensure continuity in the law. This amendment seeks to ensure that payments of benefits based on the increased amounts made by or on behalf of the director with respect to the relevant period shall be deemed to have been properly and validly paid.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Hodgson.

Would any Senator care to speak on this [Bill]? Senator Tucker, OBA Leader in the Senate, you have the floor.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam President.

We have no issue with this Bill. It is an administrative update really to correct an error, something that was overlooked some time ago. It causes me a bit of concern that we are correcting something that happened five years ago, and it took five years to actually accomplish that. So, as I said, it is a little concerning. But we are here now, and it has been corrected. So, there is no issue.

I would, though, like to ask. In September I asked about where the 2020 to 2023 actuarial reports were. And we still do not have those yet. So, if the Junior Minister could give an update on that, that would be fantastic.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Tucker.

Would any other Senator care to speak?
Senator John Wight, you have the floor.

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam President.

I am in support of this Bill. As long as the House and the Senate have previously approved the rates in 2018 as the Junior Minister has just stated, then I am in support of it. I just see it as being administrative in nature. But five years is a long time to discover it. But that being what it may, I think the appropriate thing to do is to correct a mistake that was made.

So, thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Wight.

Would any other Senator care to speak on this Bill?

Senator Wilkerson, Attorney General, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you, Madam President.

I just wanted to comment. I know there is support in the Chamber for the Bill, and I think just a couple of questions around why might it take so long to recognise an error from five years ago? I just want to say, certainly in my new role and becoming familiar with what happens in Chambers in the drafting section, there is a constant review of pieces of legislation. And sometimes it is in doing something new that there is a look-back to find out that something did not work that was previously done. And the view is, the minute that there is recognition that an error has been made, I think the protocol has been, in spite of the fact that someone might not have noticed, it has been a long time, we want to correct legislation as we go and as we find it. Because we know that other changes in subsequent pieces of legislation, this may be foundational to something else so that is the reason that it is important to make these changes at the time, notwithstanding how busy the drafters are doing other things.

Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Attorney General.

I believe it is over to you, Senator Arianna Hodgson, to pass your Bill.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President. I would like to thank those in the Chamber who have lent their support.

Senator Tucker did have a question about the actual reports. And I can say that while they are done, they will be making their way to us very soon.

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Yes.

[Laughter]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Yes, and so I will make sure that you have all of the reports that you need, Senator Tucker.

And so, hearing no other questions, Madam President, I want to move that the Bill entitled the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits and Validation) Act 2024 be now read a second time.

The President: Is there any objection to the second reading?

No objection.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 26

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that [Standing Order] 26 be suspended in respect of this Bill.

The President: Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 26 was suspended.]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Then I move that the Bill entitled the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits and Validation) Act 2024 be now read a third time.

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

No objection.

BILL

THIRD READING

CONTRIBUTORY PENSIONS (AMENDMENT OF BENEFITS AND VALIDATION) ACT 2024

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

Then I move that the Bill do now pass.

The President: Is there any objection to the passage of the Bill?

No objection.

The Bill is passed.

[Motion carried: The Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Benefits and Validation) Act 2024 was read a third time and passed.]

The President: Thank you, Senator Arianna Hodgson, and Senators for your support of the Bill.

MOTIONS

The President: There are none.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The President: Would any Senator care to speak on this topic?

Minister Darrell, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to take this opportunity to . . . (Hold one second. Sorry. Thank you, Madam President.)

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate first and foremost two of the female Senators of this Chamber. First I would like to recognise and congratulate the Attorney General, the Minister of Justice, Senator the Honourable Kim Wilkerson (also my cousin) for her recognition by ABIR [Association of Bermuda Insurers and Reinsurers] this past Monday for all of the work that she has done in private business and, more importantly, the work that she is about to do in her role as Attorney General and Minister of Justice. It was good to see her celebrated in that space, Madam President. On Monday, unfortunately, I was unable to get there. I was invited. But I know that that organisation, as well as many Bermudians, are very excited and proud of the work that [Senator the Honourable Wilkerson] has done and will continue to do in that space.

And following on with that, congratulations on a successful Community Connect that the Attorney General had last evening up in Warwick at the Warwick Workmen's Club, at which she was joined by another female Senator, Senator Arianna Hodgson, who also, coming off of a recent announcement also on Monday that she will be the candidate up in constituency 25 in Warwick, where Warwick Workmen's is located. And I want to say thank you because it is very important that we get out in the community, and it is very important that the community is recognising the work that is happening not only by the Government, but also by well-educated and well-spoken females of this community. So, I am happy and privileged to be in the Senate with those two in particular in this particular space. And congratulations to them for being honoured and being recognised for the work that they are doing and will continue to do in the community.

And while we are talking about Warwick and constituency 25, which Senator Hodgson is going to be running in, I want to talk about Warwick Workmen's Club. I did have the opportunity following the event last night to interact and do further connection with the executive members of Warwick Workmen's Club. And I just want to congratulate them. Because sometimes you go to these establishments, and there will be people who will turn up their nose to these establishments

and say, *Well, you know, all it is is what they would they call a watering hole.* But that is not the case because the conversations and the dialogue that was had last night with the executive members . . . and I will call them out. We had Mr. Kian Butterfield there. I think he is the Secretary, I think, of Warwick Workmen's. We had Mr. LaDonja Bailey, who is the Vice President of Warwick Workmen's. We also had the President who was there (and I am drawing a blank on his name right now. And I do apologise.)

But it was really good dialogue with the executive and some of their members last evening. And you know, that is very important. Because those places, and I was also at the Leopard's Club before I went up to there. And I want to congratulate these clubs for the work that they are doing in even just providing a space where individuals can discuss, individuals can kind of have very healthy dialogue as to where their country is and where their country is going. And to further discuss amongst each other the opportunities of fairness that they see and are benefiting them.

So, I want to say congratulations in this case to the executive of Warwick Workmen's and also the executive of the Leopard's Club, where they hosted a very successful third annual Eggnog and Dialogue, which was put on by the Department of Culture.

So, as we move into further holiday celebrations, I am sure there will be more times to congratulate and highlight individuals and organisations in our community that are doing good work to bring people together and good work to highlight all things that are happening in Bermuda.

So, thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Senator Tucker, OBA Leader in the Senate, you have the floor.

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam President.

I will selfishly . . . since the Minister was talking about things going on in the community, I will selfishly say, *Thank you very much to everyone who attended my Seniors Tea on Sunday at St. Mark's.*

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

An Hon. Senator: I wasn't invited!

Sen. Robin Tucker: You are not a senior yet, Minister.

[Laughter]

Sen. Robin Tucker: I want to say congratulations to . . . I do not have these two ladies' last names, but they started a group called Beyond Inclusion, Brianna and Rebecca. They invited a bunch of people to come and see a movie last night at the Media Lounge. And the movie was called *Out of My Mind*. And it was about a

young lady who has cerebral palsy. And it just sort of went through the challenges that she was having integrating into mainstream schooling and things like that. And it was a very, very insightful movie. Because it really just went through her day-to-day challenges. And certainly, you are left kind of being reminded that people, just because they have a disability, that they are still people and they still deserve to be treated accordingly. So if anyone has an opportunity to see that, [hosted by] Beyond Inclusion, I would certainly suggest it. It is very, very good.

I would like to also extend condolences first to my family, to the Butterfield family. My uncle Quinton Butterfield has passed away. He was 99 and would have celebrated his 100th birthday on January 27. So, I just want to again say to my family my condolences publicly.

And as well as I want to express condolences to the family of Kenneth Brangman. Kenneth Brangman was a constituent in constituency 7. I also know him as he worked as a caddie at Mid Ocean. He was ill, and when I did find out he was ill, I had called him up and I had promised to call him periodically just to check in on him. And we had some good conversations. And I am grateful to say that I did that. And we had some really good conversations. Good guy, nice guy, and it is very sad to know that he has passed away.

So with that, Madam President, thank you. And that is all I have today.

The President: Thank you, Senator Tucker.

Would any other Senator care to speak on congratulatory or . . .

Oh, sorry, Arianna Hodgson. Senator Arianna Hodgson, you have the floor.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

I wanted to, I guess, echo some of the comments made by our Senate Leader, Minister Darrell. I would like to celebrate our newest Attorney General, Senator Kim Wilkerson, who is also our Minister of Justice. Minister Darrell spoke to it briefly, but at ABIR's year-end reception, they actually honoured Pina Albo, who had been their first female chair, as she was making her way out. And they actually celebrated our Attorney General that same evening. So I thank them for their recognition.

I also wanted to celebrate Colin Rego and Carl Vincent on the soft launch of Pronto City Market. I actually met Carl years ago. We were both in BEDC's [Bermuda Economic Development Corporation] entrepreneurship programme. I was working on my baby food, and they were working on Droplt at the time. And then we met again at Ignite. We did that programme together. And he is always working on something. The both of them, they are not just innovative and visionary; they are persons who actually get out there. They do the work. If it does not work, they try something else.

And that is the type of innovation and creativity that drives our economy, that drives our community. So obviously, congratulations to them.

Then finally, the Progressive Labour Party just this morning announced their latest candidate in the upcoming election. He is actually Shomari Talbot-Woolridge. He is the Progressive Minds Chairman. He will be running in constituency 9, Smith's West. So I would like to congratulate him on today's announcement and wish him every success.

That is all, Madam President. Thank you.

The President: Thank you.

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Oh, wait! Sorry. One more thing.

While I am there, I just want to thank those who have assisted me in the lead-up to my announcement and those who are getting ready to head out with me as we get out in constituency 25. Grateful for the support from all sides, all walks of life. I truly appreciate it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Yes. it has been all of them.

[Laughter]

The President: Thank you, Senator Hodgson.

Now, Senator Lindsay Simmons, you have the floor.

Sen. Lindsay Simmons: Thank you, Madam President. I am just going to be really fast.

I just want to congratulate MarketPlace and all of the participants in the parade. It was an amazing evening on Sunday. My nephew, who is two months old, was so excited. He was lighting up as the parade went by with all of their lights. Obviously, he does not understand what was going on at two months. But just to see him smiling when the lights came up. And honestly, all of the participants who participated in the parade . . . so, thank you, MarketPlace. And obviously a great fireworks display that we were able to watch.

And I do want to join my Senate colleague to my right and congratulate her and Shomari. They are some of the youngest in the room for the PLP. And I think they will be great MPs when they win their seats. So congratulations on your roll-out this week. And, Madam President, hopefully Senator Hodgson will be in another place next time. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Senator Lindsay Simmons.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

No? Oh, I beg your pardon.

Minister Wilkerson, Attorney General, you have the floor.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you, Madam President.

I did not want the opportunity to miss me to join my colleagues in congratulating Senator Hodgson on her roll-out as an approved candidate for Warwick, constituency 25. It is where I grew up, so my roots are there. And I am very much looking forward to seeing what Senator Hodgson will do as she goes forward. As I believe I said to a group last night, she is the face of the go-forward PLP in engaging and supporting younger candidates who are connected with our community. So, I am wishing her every success and take this platform to join my colleagues in congratulating her.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister Wilkerson.

Would any other Senator care to speak at this time?

Hearing none, then we will move on.

ADJOURNMENT

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, I now ask that the Senate do adjourn until next week, Wednesday, December 11.

The President: Mm-hmm.

Would any Senator care to speak on the motion to adjourn?

Senator Lindsay Simmons, you have the floor.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sen. Lindsay Simmons: Madam President, I was not going to speak. But I just remembered, I was just sitting here thinking about the MPs in another place on Friday. Minister Hayward was speaking about domestic violence. And I had the opportunity to sit in a room last week with Senator Hodgson and the Attorney General, Kim Wilkerson, and Minister Furbert and some other people. And I am reflecting on Minister Hayward's speech. And I had someone who was sitting at the table, Linda Bogle-Mienzer, who was speaking as well at this roundtable. And she was speaking about men standing up. We need our men to stand up and speak about and speak against domestic violence against women.

So many times we hear about survivor stories. But we hardly hear from our men. We need men to stand up and say, *Enough is enough!* If you see somebody who you know is abusing, whether it is physical or financial, stand up and let them know that it is not right. We need more men to stand up like Minister Hayward and say that we are not going to allow our men to continue this abuse on women.

I believe that if we have more men who stand up, especially in politics, businessmen, police officers

. . . we have so many positive male role models who also turn a blind eye. I believe that men and women are doing a disservice to the community by seeing things and saying, *That is not our business*. Somebody in our meeting, I believe it was the Assistant Commissioner who said, *Before, everybody wanted to mind their own business and was told to mind their own business. But when we mind our own business and do not stand up for what is wrong, then we are just doing this country a disservice*.

So I do not want to be long. But I do want to say that, as a survivor, I thank my daddy for standing up for me. And I pray that more men will stand up for women like me who could not stand up for ourselves at the time. So I ask all men to stand up, speak on it, speak against it. Put up op-eds. If we are going to put up an op-ed, put up an op-ed from a man to say that we are not going to allow our women to be abused.

So thank you, Madam President. And again, stand up, men!

The President: Thank you, Senator Lindsay Simmons.

Would any other Senator care to speak on the motion to adjourn?

Minister Wilkerson, Attorney General, you have the floor.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you very much, Madam President.

Like my colleague, Lindsay Simmons, who just finished speaking, I also wanted to talk to the issue of domestic violence. Today, Madam President, is day 10 of the 16 Days of Activism in relation to domestic violence awareness. This has been promulgated by the United Nations Women organisation, the United Nations Population Fund, the International Labour Organization and of course here in Bermuda, my colleague referred to the roundtable conversation that we participated in last week, which marked day 1. So we are now in day 10 of the 16 Days of Activism.

And I thought it was important to use this forum, Madam President, to talk about it a little bit more. As my colleague just said, we heard a very impassioned speech from our colleague in another place, Minister Jason Hayward, last Friday as a man standing up. And what he was saying, as my colleague has said, *If you see something, say something*. And on the page for the UN Women organisation, they are hash-tagging the 16 Days of Activism with the slogan *No excuse*. And the idea is that there should be no excuse to allow domestic violence, violence against women and girls, to continue in the way that it has.

Madam President, if you will permit me, I would like to read just a little bit from the UN Women page, which talks about the 16 Days of Activism and why it is important.

The President: You certainly may.

Sen. the Hon. Kim Wilkerson: Thank you, Madam President.

So according to that organisation, “Without ending violence against women and girls, the world cannot reach the Sustainable Development Goals . . .” (which have been set out). “This violence remains a major barrier towards gender equality, a commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women . . .” So the hashtag #NoExcuse is something that I believe every community, and Bermuda included, should ponder. So taking steps to stop violence against women, there are three key points set out:

1. “End impunity by advocating for and establishing laws and policies that hold perpetrators accountable.” And that, Madam President, is something that we intend to do more of. Members of the community, those in the listening audience would have heard in the Progressive Labour Party’s Throne Speech that the domestic violence court programme is one of the things that will be rolled out in this legislative season (in the next 12 months it will be built upon) that will continue to advocate, establish laws and hold perpetrators accountable.
2. In addition, as the UN has set out, a step taken will be to adopt and implement plans, national plans to end violence against women and girls. And such plans should be definitive policies and also investing in decisions that make a difference. So there, government resources have to be brought to bear to bring this into fruition.
3. Invariably, to “Invest in prevention . . .” (programmes to ensure) “rights . . . and access to essential services for survivors.”

Madam President, my colleague, Minister Darrell, referred to a community conversation last night. And I was presenting . . . “Presenting” is probably too strong of a word. I was having a conversation with members of the community and Community Connect. And at the end of the night, a woman came up to me and she asked about getting assistance for a situation where she described a survivor of domestic abuse (and in this case, she did not mind my sharing), an incestuous situation, where the perpetrator had served time in prison here in Bermuda, has been released. They have finished serving their time. But the injustice that she described was that the victim must annually go to get her protection order renewed. Our current systems do not provide for an open-ended protection order. And this was something that was not known to me. I am learning on the job as fast as I can.

And it would seem to me that the obvious way that this should work in such a situation would be that you get a perpetual protection order. And that if the situation changes and that victim in the case somehow was able to forgive and make amends with that parent, that they can then ask for it to be lifted. But not the other

way around. And what happens in this situation is that that victim is victimised annually by our system because she is having to go through the process of getting that protection order. And we understand that, you know, family reunification may be a goal. But there are so many egregious circumstances where the rights and the protection ongoing for that victim have to be paramount.

So I use that example to say, Madam President, that there are things that we can, we must and we will do to strengthen protections for victims, to continue to advocate for reduction in domestic violence in our country. What I have learned, Madam President, is that according to the UN, governments can and certainly will pass laws. But those who do, they say countries that have powerful laws to stop domestic violence have on average lower rates of intimate partner violence than countries that do not attack it via laws. And that statistic is 9.5 per cent compared with 16.0 per cent in countries that do not have laws directly related to that issue.

As my colleague has said, we are in a period where if you see something, you must say something. There are no excuses and there are particularly no excuses to prevent us as a Government from continuing to build our laws to look at this issue very carefully and to stand up to reduce and stop domestic violence and violence in general against women and girls. So that is the mantra. We are at day 10. But this is something in the 16 Days of Activism that we should continue to keep in mind and [keep] at the front of our consciousness beyond the end of the 16 days.

Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Minister.

I see three hands.

Senator Dwayne Robinson, I will allow you to go first.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, Madam President.

I just wanted to be very brief in saying that I am extremely supportive of what has been said by my colleagues in the Progressive Labour Party in response to domestic violence. And as a man in the Chamber, I wanted to take this opportunity to speak out and to take the advice of my colleague and to say that we need to have zero tolerance for domestic violence. We need to have zero tolerance for violence in all forms, especially, though, against women and children. Because as we have seen, the statistics do not lie. And that is where the majority of these cases are. And unfortunately, they are on the rise. So as they get to the community, this is something that we need to pull together about. This is something that we need to speak to the young men about in our lives.

I frequently have this conversation with my little brother, who is 16 now, about how he needs to approach and respect the women in his life. And, you know, I do not want to hear even raising his voice an inkling to our mother at all, right? So, it is just our doing our little part in our society and using our platforms and our voices to speak against it.

So, I think Minister Hayward was right to highlight this issue. As a man, it was very crucial for him to speak out as a Member of Government. And I think that most of us in the Chamber will say we are always moved by Senator Lindsay [Simmons's] speeches on this topic, as somebody who has not only gone through it, but has come out, in my opinion, as a stronger person who contributes to this Chamber.

CRACKING DOWN ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Sen. Dwayne Robinson: And I just wanted to make a segue a bit to substance abuse. Because I believe that a lot of these things tie in to the rise in violence across the board that was seen and the rise of offences. You know, we have a culture that has somewhat accepted . . . you know, Bermudians love to drink, blah-blah-blah. We all know the song. All of us have grown up, we know the Bermudian culture. And I think that this is something that across the board legislators need to have dialogue on.

Because as we have seen, the arrests of impaired drivers has increased to a three-year high. Right? And I believe that if we drill down on a lot of these cases of alcoholism, any sort of substance abuse, we will find mental health [disorders]. We will find domestic abusers. We will find violent offenders. Because a lot of that is tied to being in a substance abuse sort of situation. A lot of that has to do with how that manifests in the lives of people, whether it be speeding, driving under the influence or abusing your partner, abusing your spouse or whatever.

So I think that we need to have an equally strong stance on this culture that we have accepted, about cracking down a bit on our substance abuse and driving while under the influence, and also linking this for people. Because I feel like a lot of times, we address problems separately. And I think folks need to see the link between, you know, domestic violence and alcoholism or substance abuse. And how letting your friend get on their bike while they are intoxicated or letting your friend go home to his spouse intoxicated, you know.

And I do not want to seem as though I am just coming down on one gender in this regard when it comes to substance abuse. But I do think that we have to take collective responsibility of, yes, your friend has come out to drink with you. But what happens after? When they leave the bar and they are intoxicated or they are using any sort of drug, what happens after they leave you and you guys have had that good time? Do

they go home and take it out on their children? Do they take it out on their spouse?

So, we need to take a collective responsibility here as far as making sure your friends know their limit. Making sure your friends get home safely. Making sure that transport is laid out. And if you are aware of the negative consequences of that night out with you, then you unfortunately are part of the problem if you continue to bring that person out, knowing that they are going to go home and take it out on their loved one.

So I think that we need to highlight issues that thread together. We cannot simply make statements and then go back out and continue the same behaviour. I have always been one of the people who, in my friends' circle, is always considered to be a nagger in a sense. And I have always been told, because I am always the one tapping them on their shoulders and saying, *Excuse me. How many fingers do I have up?* or whatever it is. And it is always, *Eh, you know, I'm having fun.* But it is the responsibility, I find. If I care about my friend, if I care about my loved one, I want them to get home safe. But not only to get home safe, but I want them to live in a safe environment in their home.

And I think that this is something that, if we do really care about our loved ones, then this is something that I think the whole community can get behind. So I am very, I use the word "proud" of my colleagues today for highlighting this very crucial issue. And I just wanted to join my voice to highlight substance abuse in our community and that we need to be kind of treating those things hand in hand going forward.

With that, Madam President, that is it for me. Thank you.

The President: Thank you, Senator Dwayne Robinson.

Dr. John Wight, you have the floor.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sen. John Wight: Thank you, Madam President.

It is usually much easier for me to talk about things like Tourism Investment Orders than it is the issue at hand. But I just want to lend my absolute 100 per cent support to all of my Senate colleagues in talking about the issues that are affecting so many families in not just Bermuda, but everywhere around the world. And I guess I was fortunate enough to be raised in a family where we learned to have great respect for all women, all children. And to see so many cases of abuse in Bermuda is troubling to everybody.

So as a male, I just want to thank all of the females, all of my Senate colleagues who have spoken so beautifully on this very important issue.

So thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator John Wight.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Senator Robin Tucker, OBA Leader in the Senate, you have the floor.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND MEN

Sen. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam President.

There is not much that I can add. I just wanted to add support to what my Senate colleagues have already said.

I am just loving the love in the room today. I really am.

[Laughter]

Sen. Robin Tucker: Although I know we are talking specifically about women today, and the Attorney General has sort of set a foundation, I just feel obligated to also add, because our comments have mushroomed a little bit more broadly. Because I do not want to leave the men out who are also being abused. Because it is easy to do unintentionally because, obviously whenever we . . . I think as a community we have been conditioned to, as soon as we hear *domestic abuse*, *domestic violence*, because it has been largely women who have been the victims of abuse that it is easy to unintentionally discount the men who are also victims of abuse.

And it is a difficult thing for a man to admit that he is being abused. But there are some in this community who are in those situations. So I just wanted to add just that tiny little piece because it is a very important piece. And if there are any men who are listening who are in that situation, just know that there are some of us who are supporting you as well. And that you are not forgotten and that you are not left out. And I do know that from a more holistic point of view that resources are coming.

DOG ATTACKS

Sen. Robin Tucker: If I may, I just want to just ever so briefly just mention something that is also a real concern of mine. I have not brought it up in a while, but I just feel compelled to now. And that is the issue of dog attacks. Fairly recently, there were several more dog attacks. And I mean, I do not know if I could use the word “angered” or “frustrated.” I do not know what the appropriate word is, but I was very, very, very upset at the fact that these . . . not just the dog attacks, that is an issue in itself. But a two-year-old child had been bitten in one of those dog attacks.

And so, I just want to remind that some of us in the public are waiting for some movement on this because it is a critical issue. And it is something that is not going to go away by osmosis. I can only imagine, and I am not saying that nothing is happening in the background. It is just stuff that is happening that the public is not aware of. I am not aware of [it], and the public is

not aware of [it]. We know that a report has gone to the Minister. But we have not heard anything since. And that was sometime in the summer.

So, as I said, I just wanted to highlight that because it is a very important thing. And it is a very important thing that we need to address. It is difficult because there are various components that make it somewhat of a contentious issue. However, it is one of those issues that we have to face, and we have to deal with it before someone else gets very, very, very seriously hurt. Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Tucker.

Would any other Senator care to speak?

Senator Arianna Hodgson, you have the floor.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND MEN

Sen. Arianna Hodgson: Thank you, Madam President.

I wanted to join the conversation that was initiated by my colleague on this side. And I wanted to lend my voice to the awareness that has been spread around the elimination of gender-based violence. And of course they tell you not to read the comments, but of course I always go and read the comments. And there were some men in the comments who spoke about the need for someone to speak up for men. I thought it was really important to recognise that generally, obviously there is abuse that is being experienced on both sides.

We also spoke about the conversation we were having with Minister Tinee Furbert at the roundtable. And what I had shared there was that I had an instance with a friend of mine. We were having a conversation. And she told me not that she was directly disappointed, but that she wished I would have been there for her in ways that I was not while she was being abused. And I told her that I did not even recognise that in that time she was being abused. But beyond the fact that I did not know, I would not have known how to intervene, how to step in, how to provide some type of support.

So, during the conversation, we talked about the fact that in many instances persons just do not even know that they are being abused. They do not understand abuse and all of its forms. They do not understand the elements and dynamics of power in abusive relationships and how that leads to unfortunate circumstances. So, I was doing some thinking, and I am always doing the talking piece. And so, I was like, *Well, what are five things that I can say to better inform the public, to better inform my peers and young persons around me?* And the first thing is that abuse can take many forms. There is financial abuse. There is emotional abuse. There is the physical. There are so many elements of abuse.

And as I spoke to briefly last week, we are seeing the impacts of that abuse in so many different ways. It is impacting our young people, our middle-aged

persons, right up to our senior years. So, the second thing was that of course, like I said, it affects people of all ages, of all backgrounds, of all genders. So, when we think about that and the fact that I guess abuse also involves an element of power and control, I think it is important that we have to give our young people and our peers—because again age is no differentiator—the tools to say, *Hey. I recognise this as abuse.*

The fourth thing is that it is not the victim's fault, that it is never the victim's fault. I know that sometimes you try to rationalise, you try to have conversations around, you try to think about what behaviours perhaps would have resulted in the final abuse at the end. And we have to remind ourselves, our peers that it is never your fault, that there is never justification for abuse in any of its forms.

And then finally, help and support are available. So, I was sitting at a table where we had the Attorney General present. We had our Minister of Youth, Social Development and Seniors. We had Tammy [Richardson]-Augustus in the room. We had Juanae Crockwell, Women's Resource Centre and Laurie Shiell of the Centre Against Abuse. We had representatives from the Gender Affairs Council. And within our council, we have a male member who often reminds us that it is not just about women. You know, this problem is bigger.

And while I often say that women . . . we invest in women, you protect even more than just the woman, I think it is important that we all feel that there is a space that we can go to. And I think that we have to, just us as a Government, we have to do a better job of telling the story, of saying that, *Hey, this person is ready and prepared to help.* We had conversations with the police. And you know, sometimes the police have issues relating and humanising themselves in their interactions with the public. But we have heard about ways that they have changed their operations to ensure that victims feel better supported during different points in the process.

Again, I appreciate those men who join the conversation, who lend a voice. Linda Bogle-Mienzer, she spoke too. She said, *You know, we need men to stand up and they need to be the ones carrying the stories.* But Tammy [Richardson-Augustus] also spoke to the fact one of her methods is to spread awareness in the international business sector. I think that abuse is something we tend to relate with a particular colour of skin, or at least it is highlighted in certain segments. But abuse is something that touches all persons. It does not matter how much money you make. Abuse is abuse. And it is present. And it is prevalent. And I think we need to encourage more conversations about abuse, about its impact, about the economic cost of abuse on our government, on our communities, in our homes. There are so many things that stem from abuse.

And I was having another conversation, I was like, *Do you think, you know, that all of society's ills and issues can be traced back to some sort of abuse?* And

I am kind of thinking that that is the case. We have to think about the way we show up for ourselves, the way we show up for our young people, the tools that we give them to succeed in life. And I think that when we are more intentional about doing that, we can begin the work of healing. There are communities that desperately desire it. So that is it for me today.

Thank you for the time, Madam President.

The President: Thank you, Senator Arianna Hodgson. Does any other Senator want to speak?

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Madam President.

The President: Minister Darrell.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sen. the Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you. Thank you, Madam President.

I would like to just lend my voice to this conversation as well. And I know we did hear, thanks to my colleague, Senator Jason Hayward, for his very riveting speech on this topic that he gave on Friday evening. I would like to also congratulate all of the individuals who have been around roundtables, whether it be in small private discussions or public settings. Also, as a former educator, the work that is going on on a daily basis from educators, school teachers, counsellors to bring this to the fore and to warn young people at a young age how to navigate through this topic.

Also, Madam President, I would like to again highlight the Minister who is leading this charge, Minister Tinee Furbert, who has taken this on not just in these 16 days, but as a mantra for her Ministry and the work that they are doing, supported also by the Junior Minister, of course, with real-life accounts of sometimes horrific stories. But those stories are what bring awareness and will bring individuals to stand up and say, *You know what? Enough is enough.*

So, it is my hope that once these 16 days, once this campaign ends, Madam President, that the topic does not get lost or go into the abyss and people just fall back into what some people may have as their norm or their reality. But we will remember this and continue to push forward with remembering the horrible, horrible topic which is domestic violence.

So, thank you, Madam President.

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The President: Thank you, Minister Darrell.

I would just like to congratulate each of you who have spoken on the topic. Because I myself for years worked in the field of mental health and substance abuse, both in London . . . And I can tell you that even working with church groups in the London area, there were a number of society and well-off people who

. . . we talk about the social drift theory where you will have people who occupy high positions get into alcohol or substance abuse. And then they lose their jobs. And then there is the social drift issue.

Then I come back home, and I was working in St. Brendan's (when it was known as St. Brendan's at the time) in mental health, as well as alcoholism services and substance abuse. I have counselled men who have been abused, and I will tell you . . . the young men who have been abused.

So, this topic . . . what has struck me in my years now is that it is getting worse. The alcohol and the substance abuse seem to have increased. I have seen more violence, more reports. Or maybe it is that people are reporting more. But it has really, really shaken me to my foundation to find that in this small Island of Bermuda, we have such a high incidence of both abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.

So, I am really pleased to hear that there are a number of people, and I know the names of the people you have mentioned this morning who are heading up some of these services. And the word needs to get out there. There is nothing to be embarrassed or ashamed about. You need to come forward. Let somebody know. There are people who can help you.

I hope that there are a number of people who are listening to us and to you all today, that they realise that they are not alone. They do not have to suffer in silence. But there are people who can help.

So, I commend each of you who have spoken. And, you know, now in this . . . I am in my 80s now; I do not mind telling people. But—

[Inaudible interjection]

The President: Hey, listen! Listen. I own it.

But I want to say to you that the abuse is getting worse. So certainly, when I came here and when [Senator] Lindsay Simmons had talked about her experience, that struck a real chord in me. Because when people talk about what they have experienced, that brings it home. And it is very distressing. But I think it is important. Those people who have listened to you all this morning know that we as a Senate, just as has been stated that in another place there was some discussion about it as well. So, it is a topical issue now. And I think that people need to know that as Legislators in both Houses, we certainly want to see an end to . . . at least help those who are in such situations.

So, I thank each one of you who have spoken on this topic today. And I only hope that we can at least assure that Legislators do understand and support all of the services that are out there to help those who find themselves in such situations. So, thank you. And if there are . . . I don't know if there are any other comments anyone wants to make.

But if not, then . . . [Senator].

ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sen. Lindsay Simmons: Thank you, Madam President.

I just want to say thank you to everybody. And just the last couple of words are just to remember for all to just stand up. Thank you.

The President: Thank you.

With that said then, Senate stands adjourned until next week, Wednesday. And thank you all for your attendance and your comments today. Be well.

[At 12:13 pm, the Senate stood adjourned until Wednesday, 11 December 2024.]