



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

29 MAY 2026

*(Sitting number 36 of the 2025/2026 Session)
(pages 2921-2998)*

**Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, JP, MP
Deputy Speaker**

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**BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
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29 MAY 2026
10:03 AM**

Sitting Number 36 of the 2025/2026 Session

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, everybody.

Several Hon. Members: Good morning.

The Deputy Speaker: The [Deputy] Clerk will lead us off in prayer.

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mrs. Kara A. Beale, Deputy Clerk]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, the House is now open.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: I hope that was loud enough.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The Deputy Speaker: We now have confirmation of Minutes, and I am just letting you know that the Minutes of 26 May *[sic]* are being deferred. Sorry, 15 May 2026 are being deferred.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING**

APOLOGIES

The Deputy Speaker: I just want the House to know that the Speaker and the Clerk are attending a conference at the [2026] Commons and Overseas Territory Speakers' Conference in the Cayman Islands and are therefore absent today.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

**PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER
PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019—ANNUAL
REPORT 2025/26**

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 Annual Report \[2025/26\]](#).

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
I call on the Minister of Tourism, Sports, Community Affairs *[sic]* . . .

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is Minister of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport.

The Deputy Speaker: I knew it was something . . . I just got . . .

[Laughter]

**TOURISM INVESTMENT (ROSEWOOD
BERMUDA) ORDER 2026**

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the consideration of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Tourism Investment \(Rosewood Bermuda\) Order 2026](#) 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 Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
I call on the . . . oh, the same Minister. Go.

Hon. Owen Darrell: [Minister of] Tourism [and] Transport, Culture and Sport, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

BERMUDA AIRPORT AUTHORITY 2023/24 ANNUAL REPORT

Hon. Owen Darrell: I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of this Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda Tourism . . . sorry, the [Bermuda Airport Authority Annual Report 2023/24](#).

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Petitions, there are none. Statements by Ministers and—

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Minister of Economy and Labour.

Minister, sorry for overlooking you.

REGISTRY GENERAL, ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the [Annual Report of the Registry General for the year ended the 31st of December 2025](#) in accordance with section 19 of the Registration (Births and Deaths) Act 1949.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister, and again apologies.

PETITIONS

The Deputy Speaker: As I said before, there are none.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS AND JUNIOR MINISTERS

The Deputy Speaker: I call on the Premier and Minister of Finance.

DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to update this Honourable House on the recently completed Bermuda Digital Finance Forum and to outline the [next steps the Government will take](#) to build on the momentum generated by that event.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda's place in the world has never been determined by our size. Our success has come from our ability to adapt, to innovate, and to recognise opportunities before others do. That is how Bermuda became one of the world's leading insurance and reinsurance centres. We worked with the regulator, listened to industry, protected our reputation,

and built a sector that is now a cornerstone of our economy and internationally recognised for its innovation and regulatory excellence. Digital finance can be the next chapter of that story.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when this Government first set out its FinTech strategy, there were those who questioned whether digital assets had a future and whether Bermuda should be involved at all. Yet while others doubted, Bermuda acted. Today, serious companies have established themselves here, investment has followed, and Bermuda has earned international recognition for its leadership in digital asset regulation and innovation. We have built a respected regulatory framework, attracted world-class businesses, developed a growing digital asset insurance market, and created an environment where innovators, investors, regulators, and policymakers come together to shape the future of finance. And, for the second consecutive year, the Bermuda Digital Finance Forum demonstrated just how far Bermuda has come.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Forum brought together some of the most influential people and institutions shaping the future of finance, technology, regulation, digital assets, artificial intelligence, and tokenised financial products.

The Forum featured participation from Craig Swan, Chief Executive Officer of the Bermuda Monetary Authority, and other officials of the Authority, alongside global digital finance leaders including Dr. Nouriel Roubini; Charles Hoskinson, founder of the Cardano network; Arjun Sethi and David Ripley, co-CEOs of Kraken, one of the world's leading digital asset platforms; Sandy Kaul, Executive Vice President of Digital Assets and Innovation at Franklin Templeton; and leaders from firms and foundations that are choosing Bermuda as a place to build, grow, and operate within our respected regulatory framework.

Across the institutional conference and community programming, more than 1,000 persons registered. The institutional conference itself attracted 524 attendees, including 227 local participants and 297 international participants.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Forum witnessed several important announcements:

- The Stellar Development Foundation announced plans to support a Digital Bermuda Dollar on the Stellar blockchain network.
- The Bermuda Monetary Authority granted Bitcoin Suisse International dual approvals under the Digital Asset Business Act [2018] and the Investment Business Act [1998], allowing that entity to provide regulated digital asset management and investment advisory services from Bermuda.
- Kimber Digital Assets Bermuda ISAC Ltd., also known as Plume, received a Class M Digital Asset Business licence and is positioning Bermuda at the forefront of regulated tokenised

real-world assets. Plume is the largest real world asset platform in the global market, combining the transparency and accessibility of decentralised finance with prudential oversight from a globally respected financial regulator.

- STS Digital Ltd. received a Class F Digital Asset Business licence after progressing through Bermuda's Test, Modified, and Full licensing regime. Significantly, STS chose to relocate its operations from Switzerland to Bermuda, underscoring the growing recognition of Bermuda as a jurisdiction of choice for digital finance businesses seeking regulatory certainty and a credible pathway for international growth.
- Payward, the parent company of Kraken, and Franklin Templeton announced a partnership to expand tokenised financial products for institutional investors.
- The NEAR Foundation announced support for Bermuda as an infrastructure partner for AI-powered public services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, these announcements matter because they reflect the continued growth of Bermuda's digital finance sector and the confidence that leading firms and institutions have in our jurisdiction.

Serious companies are choosing Bermuda, global financial institutions are partnering here, new products are being launched from our jurisdiction, and new licences continue to be granted under Bermuda's regulatory framework. Taken together, these developments reinforce Bermuda's position as a trusted, well-regulated, and internationally respected centre for digital finance and innovation.

That position did not happen by accident, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is the result of years of work by the Bermuda Monetary Authority, legislative action by this Honourable House, and a deliberate strategy pursued by this Government. Long before many larger jurisdictions entered this space, Bermuda established a framework that balanced innovation with strong oversight. Today, we are seeing the benefits of that approach as companies continue to choose Bermuda as a place to invest, build, and grow.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the international component of the Forum was important, one of the most encouraging aspects of this year's event was the increased participation of Bermudians.

The community activation at Pier 6 brought together more than 500 people to learn about digital finance, set up digital wallets, and experience digital payments in a real-world marketplace. To encourage participation, the Government sponsored 600 free tickets, allowing Bermudians to attend educational workshops, complete wallet onboarding, and receive up to \$280 in digital assets.

In total, over \$62,000 in digital assets were distributed, including USDC, a US-dollar stablecoin provided through Coinbase and Circle, and Kraken

xStocks, which provide a digital representation of traditional investment products. Participants received Kraken xStocks representing shares in the Franklin Templeton Gold ETF in digital form.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while some of this may sound technical (although I am sure the people who received their digital gold did not feel it was technical) the point is simple. Bermudians were not merely hearing about digital finance; they were using it.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. E. David Burt: They learned how digital wallets work, how digital assets can be received and stored, how payments can be made, and how digital assets can be saved and invested.

Thirty vendors were trained through the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation to accept digital payments. Those businesses successfully accepted payments during the event, and more than \$20,000 in [USDC] was spent with local vendors during the activation and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Entrepreneur Wanda Trott-Murray of Patch That! Bermuda described the experience as *a very smooth and easy transition with no cash in hand*, noting that it simplified payments and allowed her to focus on her business.

Her experience reflects what many participants discovered during the event: that digital payments can be efficient, accessible, and beneficial for both consumers and businesses.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that experience highlights an important question. If Bermudian businesses can accept digital payments, if Bermudians can use digital assets to purchase goods and services, and if regulated financial institutions can operate in this space, then when will the Government create legislative certainty for its own use of digital assets?

The answer, Madam Deputy Speaker, is that the Cabinet has approved policy proposals to advance Bermuda's digital finance legislative framework. These proposals will modernise the FinTech Development Fund, update the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act, and amend the Public Funds Act to ensure that digital assets can be accepted and managed under established public finance controls.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the FinTech Development Fund already exists in law, having been established by this Honourable House in 2018. This legislation will be updated so that it can support Bermuda's on-chain economy initiative and provide a mechanism through which contributions can be received and deployed to support education, entrepreneurship, and responsible digital finance development in Bermuda.

The Fund will support local entrepreneurs, training programmes, public awareness initiatives, and projects that help Bermudians participate in this growing sector. It will operate with appropriate governance,

reporting requirements, and oversight. Importantly, at least 50 per cent of monies disbursed from the Fund will be reserved for projects involving companies with majority Bermudian ownership.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the success of Bermuda's digital finance strategy cannot be measured solely by the number of international companies we attract. It must also be measured by the number of Bermudians who are able to participate, build businesses, develop new products and services, and create ownership opportunities within this sector. As Bermuda advances its global leadership in digital finance, Bermudians must have meaningful opportunities to share in the value that this industry creates.

We must also recognise that while Bermuda has made significant progress, there is still more work to do. Some Bermudians who have sought to build businesses in this space have encountered challenges, and while Bermuda's regulatory framework has earned international respect and credibility, we must continue to modernise by creating clearer pathways for local participation while ensuring that Bermudians who are prepared to innovate and invest have the support they need to succeed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Cabinet has also approved updates to the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act and the Public Funds Act. These amendments will clarify the Government's authority to accept stablecoins and other approved digital payments for Government services, fees, and obligations, while also modernising the framework governing the investment of public funds so that approved financial instruments may be held and managed in digital form where appropriate. They will confirm the Accountant General's role in establishing practical processes for receiving, managing, reconciling, and auditing those payments and assets.

Financial Instructions will likewise be updated where necessary to ensure that digital payments and digital financial instruments are subject to the same safeguards, accountability, and oversight that already apply to existing forms of payment and investment. These are not new standards, but simply the application of existing public finance controls to modern forms of money and finance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am mindful that some may choose to distort what these changes mean, particularly when they hear references to Government investing in digital assets; however, the reality is much simpler. Many traditional financial instruments are increasingly available in digital form. Treasury bills, money market instruments, and regulated fund products can now be issued, recorded, held, or settled digitally, while remaining subject to the same regulatory, governance, and investment standards that apply today.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the same approach that helped make Bermuda a global leader in insurance and reinsurance is now being applied to digital finance.

Today, the results are clear. Sixty-five international companies have chosen Bermuda, global financial institutions are partnering with Bermuda, new financial products are being launched from Bermuda, and Bermudians are participating. At the same time, the Government is putting in place the legal and operational framework necessary to ensure that the benefits of this growth are shared more broadly throughout our economy, creating opportunities for Bermudians to participate, build businesses, develop new skills, and benefit from the success of this emerging sector.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

I now call on the Minister for Housing, Minister, . . . and Municipalities.

GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you. Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with a timely [update on the Government's resolute commitment](#) to addressing one of the most demanding needs facing our community, namely the provision of accessible, high-quality, and affordable housing for the people of Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while certain detached commentators and predictable political critics have recently taken to the pages of the local periodicals—specifically *The Royal Gazette*—to call into question this Government's vision and dedication, let me assure this House and the listening public that we are not distracted. We are focused on delivery.

Let us be completely clear, Madam Deputy Speaker: we are reading critiques from individuals who sat around the Cabinet table for years and failed to deliver the affordable housing Bermuda desperately needed.

An Hon. Member: Like the PLP for 10 years!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Now, when the problem has been compounded in part by their years of inaction, they attempt to lecture us through the newspaper columns. While they look backwards and try to score political points, this Government is looking forward and moving dirt. We are advancing a robust, thoroughly evaluated, and fiscally responsible strategy to bring real and lasting relief to Bermudian families.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there are those who would have the public believe that a project of this scale should be micro-managed directly from the Minister's desk, or that working through our quangos somehow equates to a lack of oversight. Let me categorically correct that misconception.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let us be clear about how this Government operates. Ministries' structures are about accountability, efficiency, and statutory alignment. The Ministry of Housing and Municipalities is designed to develop policy, establish strategy, and enforce strict regulatory oversight. We are not here to build empires within the civil service or duplicate roles. By directing this work through the established statutory frameworks of the Bermuda Land Management Corporation and the Bermuda Housing Corporation, we are utilising the exact entities that hold the specific legislative mandates, the specialised real estate portfolios, and the technical mechanisms necessary for large-scale delivery.

By pairing our quangos with nimble, specialised private sector entities, and leveraging the invaluable expertise of local engineers, project managers, and technical professionals, we harness the corporate flexibility and precise technical expertise required to manage massive construction and housing portfolios. This structure ring-fences the project commercially, ensures a rigorous separation between policy setting and procurement execution, and allows us these housing initiatives with the speed and strict oversight that the Bermudian public expects.

We are not letting these entities work in silos. Madam Deputy Speaker, project delivery will be a highly coordinated, joint effort overseen by the BHC in strict collaboration with the BLMC. To formalise their relationship both during and after the construction work, a memorandum of understanding is currently being established between BLMC and BHC to explicitly map out roles, responsibilities, procurement guidelines, and project delivery timelines.

This structure allows us to move quickly on a thoroughly vetted strategy. The BLMC has, in collaboration with the BHC and the Ministry, pressed on over the past several months with intense feasibility assessments, site identifications, and engineering evaluations. Traditional Bermudian construction was examined. But, frankly, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is too expensive and takes much too long when our people need housing now.

Following rigorous assessments that included physical site visits to overseas manufacturing facilities and multiple vendor evaluations, precast [concrete] construction was determined to be the absolute best solution for our Island and for our timeframe. It is cost-effective, incredibly fast to assemble, exceptionally durable, and resilient against Bermuda's harsh and varied environmental conditions.

Furthermore, Madam Deputy Speaker, despite what the sceptics are claiming in the media, this is no *untried experiment*. This method has an established and highly successful local track record. It was the exact methodology which was successfully deployed by the BLMC under its former entity, the West End Development Corporation—or WEDCO—

Hon. E. David Burt: Was that around the America's Cup?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, we will get there—to replace the dilapidated and now-demolished Victoria Row buildings. We know it works; we know it lasts, and because the BLMC has already done it, [they] are [the] ideal entity to lead this project. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, let us not forget that—

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —if the OBA had not stepped in and scaled back that exact development following the 2012 election—

Hon. E. David Burt: Aah!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —this country would have had an additional 80 affordable homes available for our people well over 10 years ago.

An Hon. Member: Not Cross Island!

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Ten years ago!

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am proud and excited to announce that this initial phase of the Affordable Housing Programme will deliver 229 residential units strategically spread across four main sites:

- 24 two-bedroom units in Albert Row, Dockyard;
- 24 three-bedroom units and 12 two-bedroom units in Victoria Place, Dockyard;
- 110 one-bedroom units in Southampton, adjacent to Dr. Cann Park;
- 12 two-bedroom units and 12 three-bedroom units on Tommy Fox Road in St. David's; and
- 35 single-occupancy units retrofitted in the existing Channel House in St. David's, specifically for senior living.

To ensure the highest standards, two premier partners have been identified, each with successful experience in Bermuda and the capability to meet our strict building codes. They are Coastal Precast Systems of Virginia, USA, who will be supporting delivery at Albert Row, Victoria Place, and Tommy Fox Road; and Preconco Limited of Barbados to support the project at Dr. Cann Park II, as we are calling it at the moment.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me make one thing abundantly clear to this House and to the critics: Bermudian contractors and service providers will be at

the very heart of this project. Local industry will play a key role in driving the site preparation, civil works, foundations, infrastructure installation, and complete interior fit outs. Channel House will be upgraded entirely by local contractors. We are marrying off-site manufacturing efficiency with a direct, massive investment into the pockets of local workers.

A project of this magnitude requires robust financial backing and commercial discipline, not political rhetoric. I am pleased to inform this House that financing has been fully secured through the Bermuda Commercial Bank and Clarien Bank Bermuda, backed by a Government Guarantee.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the total estimated investment for this initial phase is \$114,750,000.

Hon. E. David Burt: Million! On top of record investments in affordable housing we have already made.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Every single dollar of this investment represents a direct injection into the social fabric and economic future of this country.

Running this work through our quangos does not mean a reduction in oversight. In fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, it means a more efficient, rigorous, commercially structured process. The BLMC-led procurement framework includes the finalisation of technical design specifications, structured engagement with suppliers, and evaluations based strictly on cost, capacity, code compliance, and delivery timelines. Contract finalisation and mobilisation will remain subject to all necessary approvals under BLMC's purview.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while our overall vision through the Housing Strategy and our commitments for the future are important, I want to make it abundantly clear to this Honourable House and to the listening public: we are not just talking about what we will build.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to share what this Government is doing right now, again through the BHC. There is a lively parallel track of affordable developments in train, approaching the finish line, and being delivered in the background while we hear the criticisms wash by. Let me quiet that noise with some more good news.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this House will recall last week's news about the work at Middletown. It is now officially complete. The BHC is actively working with four Bermudian families to move them into these newly renovated two-bedroom units immediately. And, unlike the unrealistic market prices being charged elsewhere, the rent is set at a fair, truly affordable \$1,400 per month.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is real relief, delivered right now.

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey, hey.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: At the Chelsea houses in St. David's, \$2.7 million have been invested to build five [new] units, consisting of two 3-bedroom units and three 2-bedroom units. The local contractor, Millwood Construction, is working diligently, and I am pleased to confirm that they are on target for completion in July.

The Battery Phase II development, also in St. David's, is in progress, and invests \$3.75 million to deliver another 12 units, consisting of four 2-bedrooms, two 1-bedroom units, and six studio units. This work will be completed between August and September of this year.

Furthermore, Madam Deputy Speaker, new life is being breathed into the Harmony Club [campus] with an extensive, multi-phase regeneration project. Madam Deputy Speaker, \$2.6 million is being invested into Harmony Terrace North to completely repurpose 16 efficiency units.

Hon. E. David Burt: Record amounts of investment.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Whenever we disturb older buildings there are bound to be some unforeseen surprises, and this project is no different. Old ductwork, slabs discovered in ceiling spaces, and the need to shift a wall to create a proper pump room are among the challenges being dealt with. Completion of these works, Madam Deputy Speaker, is targeted for early next year.

Looking ahead into 2027, Harmony Terrace South will see another 16 efficiency units completely retrofitted, with a target completion date in the third quarter of next year. To ensure that the Harmony Club campus is able to adequately serve its tenants, the BHC is spending a further \$360,000 on trenching and essential infrastructure upgrades for BELCO metering, transformers, communications, and piped water to be installed. Materials for this work are arriving on site within the next few weeks. This work is expected to be complete in the third quarter of this year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, despite the absolute nonsense—

An Hon. Member: Nonsense!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —being spun in the media—

Another Hon. Member: Come on.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —you can see that no one is dragging their feet on this side of the House.

Hon. E. David Burt: Nonsense!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We are moving with purpose, we are moving with speed,—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —and we are moving to deliver for the Bermudian people. Subject to Planning approvals, contract finalisation, and site preparation, we anticipate breaking ground in or around August of this year. From the moment construction begins, we are looking at an aggressive, highly efficient timeline of approximately 18 months to get Bermudians into these homes.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the contrarians write their newspaper columns and try to cast doubt on this Government's capability, we will continue to do the tangible work of the people. We will be continuously engaging with area residents, community groups, and stakeholders every step of the way. Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government promised to deliver affordable housing, and through partnership with our quangos, we are doing exactly that.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in closing, I would like to acknowledge the sterling efforts of the team at BHC, BLMC and the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities who have been diligently managing these projects, especially Mr. Paul Martin, Mr. Andrew Dias, Mr. Keino Furbert-Jacobs (who is doing five men's jobs at the same time), and Mr. Blake Lambert. I would also like to thank the Affordable Housing Advisory committee for their yeoman work.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: I now call on the Minister of Economy and Labour.

You have the floor.

REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to introduce the [Annual Report of the Registry General](#) for the year ended 31 December 2025. The Registrar General recognises the essential role that vital [statistical] information plays in planning for the provision of services in areas such as tourism, health, education and housing, to name a few, and has performed his duties to a high standard in the recording, collating and presenting of the data to be included in the Annual Report.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with section [19] of the Registration (Births and Deaths) Act 1949, the Registrar General shall, within 90 days after the expiration of each calendar year, compile for publication in such form and manner as the Minister may approve a summary of the births and deaths which occurred during the year, together with a general report on the increase or decrease of the population of Bermuda. Pursuant to section 35 of the Marriage Act 1944, the Registrar General is also required to publish a summary of marriages [conducted] each year.

Madam Deputy Speaker, in preparation of the Annual Report, the Registrar has relied on information received from

- the Records Office of the King Edward VII Hospital relating to births;
- local funeral directors, medical practitioners, and the Coroner's Office in relation to deaths;
- local domestic partnership officers in relation to domestic partnerships; and
- from local marriage officers and Masters of Bermuda-registered ships in relation to local and maritime marriages, respectively.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Report, which deals primarily with the vital statistics pertaining to the Island's residential population, [indicates] that there has been a slight increase in the number of births. In 2025, there were 452 births; an increase of 27 over the 425 births recorded in 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the distribution of live births by nationality for 2025, based on information provided by parents at the time of registration of their child's birth, shows that 75.4 per cent, or 341, of the total live births have at least one Bermudian parent. In 2025, 111, or 24.6 per cent, of the births have parents who are both non-Bermudian.

Honourable colleagues are advised that in 2025, Madam Deputy Speaker, 552 deaths were recorded among residents, a decrease from the 602 deaths recorded in 2024. The Report also indicates that there were six deaths in respect of non-resident persons, which brings the total number of deaths recorded for 2025 to 558.

For the year ending 31 December 2025, Madam Deputy Speaker, 273 marriages were performed in Bermuda, a decrease of 56, or 20.5 per cent, from the 329 marriages recorded in 2024. During 2025, marriages between parties who were both non-residents accounted for 95, or 34.8 per cent, of the total of 273. The Report also shows that there were 148 marriages between parties who were both residents and 30 marriages between a resident and non-resident.

Madam Deputy Speaker, marriages are regularly performed aboard 28 Bermuda-registered ships. In 2025, the number of maritime marriages was 490, which represents an increase of 145, or 29.6 per cent, from the 2024 total of 345. The increase is due to efforts of the cruise line industry to expand services for weddings onboard their ships. The cumulative number of

marriages (local and maritime) processed through the Registry General for the year ending 31 December 2025, was 763 as compared to 674 for the year 2024.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Domestic Partnership Act 2018 allows for the formalisation of unions between partners. In 2025, there were four domestic partnership unions recorded. All four domestic partnership unions were between couples who were residents and they were formalised at the Registry General Office.

In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Annual Report provides an illustrative statistical digest of vital events such as [live] births, deaths, stillbirths, marriages, domestic partnerships, adoptions and re-registration of births in Bermuda for the year ended 31 December 2025.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

I now call on the Minister of . . . Minister Furbert. Yes.

HEARING SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAMME

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Good morning and thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I stand before this Honourable House to announce the [Pilot Hearing Support Programme](#).

Hearing is fundamental to how we experience the world. It allows us to connect with others, engage in our communities, and maintain our overall well-being. According to the World Health Organization, more than 1.5 billion people worldwide experience some degree of hearing loss. Hearing loss is defined as the inability to hear as well as someone with normal hearing—typically measured as thresholds of 20 decibels or better in both ears—and can range from mild to profound, affecting one or both ears.

Madam Deputy Speaker, hearing loss can occur at any stage of life. However, it is particularly prevalent amongst older adults. The World Health Organization estimated in 2019 that over 65 per cent of adults aged 60 and older experience hearing loss. In fact, age-related hearing loss is one of the leading causes of years lived with disability globally, and the leading cause amongst adults over the age of 70.

Madam Deputy Speaker, census data, based on self-reporting, often underestimates mild or moderate hearing loss. In 2010, 814 people in Bermuda reported hearing difficulties or complete deafness—775 with difficulties (95.2 per cent) and 39 with complete deafness (4.8 per cent). Of these, 209 (25.7 per cent) said their condition was disabling. Most cases (57.5 per cent) were among those aged 65-plus, and women comprised nearly 57 per cent of disabling cases. Age-group analysis shows hearing difficulties affect all adults, not just seniors. Hearing loss rates were similar across racial groups. However, this information is outdated, highlighting the need for updated data to reflect

current trends and practices. We look forward to updated information following the completion of the 2026 Census, which will support continued planning and ongoing development of this programme.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the impact of hearing loss extends well beyond physical health. It can significantly affect quality of life. Among older adults, untreated hearing loss is strongly associated with social isolation and loneliness. When individuals struggle to hear and participate in conversations, they may begin to withdraw from social situations. Research shows that those who experience hearing loss and do not use hearing aids report higher levels of loneliness, increased rates of depression, and an overall lower quality of life.

Emerging research also highlights a connection between hearing loss and cognitive decline. The Lancet Commission on Dementia Prevention identified hearing loss as a [modifiable] risk factor for dementia, particularly when addressed in mid-life. While causation has not been [definitively] established, reduced auditory input may contribute to decreased cognitive stimulation over time, in addition to social isolation, another risk factor for dementia. The Commission recommends that hearing loss be addressed across the life course through both public health strategies and individual action.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the Department of Financial Assistance provides essential support to our community, including coverage for standard hearing aids, gaps still remain. Financial Assistance clients and persons with public or private insurance may still face co-payments for hearing tests, which can discourage uptake. In addition, hearing tests and hearing devices are not covered under the current FutureCare or HIP plans. FutureCare is the largest insurer of our seniors on Island. As a result, many individuals continue to face financial barriers to accessing essential hearing care.

It is in response to the growing body of international evidence and current system gaps that the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors has commissioned a pilot hearing support benefit programme. Through a targeted grant administered by Age Concern, the Ministry will provide support towards the cost of hearing assessments and hearing devices for adults in financial need who are uninsured or underinsured. The programme launched in early May, and applications are available.

Adults requiring support for hearing tests or hearing aids may make application for this benefit programme. Applications will be available from Age Concern and hearing service providers. All applications will be submitted to Age Concern who will assess applicants aged 50 and older, while applications for individuals under 50 will be sent to Ageing and Disability Services for review.

This initiative is designed both to respond to current gaps and to build a clearer understanding of

demand, helping to inform sustainable, long-term solutions. The Ministry of Health is advancing significant work through health reform and universal coverage. Accordingly, this pilot will provide targeted support now while contributing valuable insight for [the Ministry of] Health's broader system development efforts.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our Government is committed to ensuring that people with disabilities, including those experiencing hearing loss, have access to the support and services they need to live healthy and connected lives. We also recognise the importance of prevention, particularly as it relates to reducing the risk of dementia within our community.

We encourage all individuals to protect their hearing and to seek assessment and support as early as possible and make application to the hearing support programme if needed.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

I believe you have a second [Statement], do you?

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Yes, I do.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Whenever you are ready you may proceed.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you.

DISABILITY INCLUSION, ADVANCING OF

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to speak about an issue that goes to the heart of who we are as a country: how we treat persons with disabilities, how we remove barriers to full participation in the community, and how we build a Bermuda that truly works for everyone.

For too long, persons with disabilities in Bermuda have told us, clearly and consistently, that despite existing laws, they continue to face discrimination, exclusion, and barriers that many of us never have to consider. Barriers in public spaces, employment, education, housing, transportation, digital access, and public services to name a few.

To be clear, Madam Deputy Speaker: [disability inclusion](#) is not about charity. It is not about accommodation as an afterthought. It is about dignity, rights, fairness, and respect.

Madam Deputy Speaker, when Bermuda adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, we made a statement to the world—and more importantly, to our own people—that persons with disabilities are entitled to full inclusion, equal opportunity, and real participation in every aspect of public life. That commitment was not symbolic. It was a call to action.

Listening to the voices of persons with disabilities and their families has made one thing abundantly

clear: Despite the existence of legislation designed to protect the rights of people with disabilities this is not enough. We are aware improvements must be made, as persons with disabilities continue to experience discrimination and are faced with systemic barriers that impact full and equal participation in society. This is supported by the Human Rights Commission Disability Inclusion Report titled [Nothing about Us, Without Us](#) by underscoring the need for sustained improvements.

This Government is committed to taking decisive action to move from promise to delivery by advancing two pathways concurrently: strengthening and amending existing legislation, while also establishing standalone legislation through a comprehensive Disability Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, one pathway prioritises more immediate legislative gains, delivering earlier and tangible benefits for persons with disabilities, while the other provides for comprehensive, system-wide reform of existing standards. This second pathway will require a longer timeframe for the development and implementation of new legislation. It has also been determined that, alongside the advancement of both legislative pathways, a dedicated disability unit will be established.

This disability unit will be a foundational component in driving disability inclusion across Government and throughout our society.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the initial phase, the priority is developing the scope and role of the disability unit and establishing the appropriate legal framework that would provide a clear, enforceable statutory mandate to coordinate, monitor, and proactively drive disability inclusion across the public and private sectors. The disability unit will be staffed by a Programme Manager and an Education and Accessibility Officer. The Programme Manager will assist with the development and implementation of standards and guidance to systematically address societal barriers to inclusion. The Education and Accessibility Officer will work to assist stakeholders with implementing accessibility standards, and lead education campaigns to improve public awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities, inclusion and what inclusion looks like in employment, customer service, public spaces, transportation, and how we communicate information.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Ageing and Disability Services will continue to advance amendments to the Human Rights Act 1981, such as the enhancement of the definition of disability, in addition to identifying, aligning and coordinating proactive enforcement standards under the disability unit within the legislative framework of the Human Rights Act. This ensures our domestic framework aligns with international standards and reflects a modern and more effective approach to inclusion. However, [any] disability-related amendments to the Human Rights Act must be developed in consultation and coordination with existing initiatives underway by the Human Rights Commission.

Madam Deputy Speaker, disability inclusion is not the responsibility of one Ministry alone. I want to repeat that, Madam Deputy Speaker: *disability inclusion is not the responsibility of one Ministry alone*. It touches housing; it touches health, education, transportation, planning, employment, financial assistance, and digital services to name a few. That is why this work is deliberately cross-ministerial. We are breaking down silos and building shared ownership across government.

Just as importantly, this work is being guided by a principle that has been voiced clearly and repeatedly by the disability community: *Nothing about us, without us*. Persons with disabilities are not passive recipients of policy. They are experts in their lived experiences. Their voices must help shape how systems are designed, how services are delivered, and how standards are enforced.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let me also say this: Inclusion benefits all of us. And this is why it was extremely important over the past year for Ageing and Disability Services to engage in internal and external consultations with stakeholders, so that this policy direction has the input needed to make the meaningful impact for change.

Madam Deputy Speaker, our vision is clear: A Bermuda where persons with disabilities can live, work, learn, and fully participate, without unnecessary barriers, without exclusion, and without having to fight for basic access and equal opportunity.

That is the direction this Government is committed to taking to ensure we strengthen and empower persons with disability to be fully included in all aspects of life in Bermuda, so that no one gets left behind.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you Minister.

Now we move on to the Ministry of National Security, and I call on the said Minister.

AIRPORT RESCUE AND FIREFIGHTING, COMMISSIONING OF NEW VEHICLES

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, good morning colleagues and listening audience.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to inform this Honourable House and the people of Bermuda of an important investment in our national emergency response capability. The [Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service has now commissioned](#) four new Rosenbauer PANTHER Airport Rescue and Firefighting crash tenders for deployment at the L. F. Wade International Airport. These vehicles have been received, the required training and familiarisation have been completed, and the new fleet is now in operational service.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a significant milestone for the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, for airport operations, and for public safety more

broadly. The L. F. Wade International Airport is Bermuda's principal air gateway. It connects our people to the world, supports our tourism and business sectors, and plays a vital role in the movement of residents, visitors, goods, medical travel, and emergency support.

Madam Deputy Speaker, ensuring that the airport is supported by a strong, reliable, and properly equipped Airport Rescue and Firefighting capability is therefore not optional. It is essential. The commissioning of these four new crash tenders renews a critical frontline asset and replaces ageing specialist vehicles with modern appliances designed specifically for the airport emergency response environment. The previous vehicles had reached the end of their useful service life and were becoming increasingly difficult to maintain. Replacing them was therefore necessary to reduce operational risk, improve reliability, and ensure that the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service can continue to deliver the specialist response capability required at the airport.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Rosenbauer PANTHER is a highly specialised Airport Rescue and Firefighting vehicle. It is designed to support rapid response, effective firefighting performance, and operational reliability in circumstances where seconds matter.

In an airport emergency, speed, coordination, and capability are essential. These vehicles are built to deliver high extinguishing performance, support safe incident management, and enable firefighters to respond quickly and effectively to aircraft-related incidents.

This new fleet strengthens the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service's ability to meet the response demands associated with airport rescue and firefighting operations. It also supports the continuity of airport operations, which is a matter of national importance.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I want to be clear that acquiring specialist vehicles of this nature is only one part of the work. The successful commissioning of this fleet also required training, familiarisation, operational preparation, and coordination among the relevant personnel. Firefighters and technical staff have completed the required training in the operation and maintenance of the vehicles, allowing them to be fully integrated into frontline response arrangements at the airport. That preparation ensures that the investment is not simply sitting on the apron as new equipment but is actively supporting operational readiness.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this investment reflects the Government's continued commitment to strengthening emergency response infrastructure and supporting the men and women who serve on the front lines. Our firefighters are asked to respond in some of the most challenging and time-sensitive circumstances. They deserve equipment that is fit for purpose, reliable, and capable of supporting the level of service expected of a modern airport rescue and firefighting operation.

The commissioning of these four crash tenders will improve reliability, reduce the operational risks associated with ageing specialist vehicles, and strengthen Bermuda's ability to respond to emergencies at our principal air gateway. Of course, the sustained benefit of this investment will depend on routine maintenance, recurrent training, and sound asset management. Those responsibilities will remain central to ensuring that this fleet continues to serve Bermuda effectively over the medium term.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also wish to acknowledge the leadership and professionalism of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service throughout this process. The service continues to play a vital role in national safety, not only through structural firefighting and emergency response across the Island, but also through its specialist airport rescue and firefighting responsibilities. I extend my appreciation to the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Dana Lovell; the officers and firefighters assigned to airport operations; the technical and support personnel involved in the commissioning process; and all those who contributed to bringing this new fleet into service. Their work ensures that Bermuda remains prepared, responsive and ready to meet the demands placed on its emergency services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the commissioning of these four Rosenbauer PANTHER Airport Rescue and Firefighting crash tenders represents a practical investment in public safety, strengthening emergency preparedness at the L. F. Wade International Airport and ensuring that our firefighters have the specialist equipment required to protect life, support life and support our safe airport operations.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the Minister of Home Affairs, Minister Lightbourne, you have the floor.

CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise today to report to this Honourable House and the public on the consultation that the Ministry of Home Affairs has conducted on the transition and intention to pursue [full membership in CARICOM](#). That consultation opened earlier this year with the tabling of the Green Paper, *The Story of Us* and the launch of the public campaign.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public engagement has run in two stages; one before the Green Paper and one after. Before publication, Madam Deputy Speaker, the Ministry consulted stakeholders to shape the structure and content of the Green Paper itself, inviting views on the elements that must be included in its contents. After publication, the Ministry opened the consultation to the wider public. That phase has carried

Island-wide town halls, structured sessions with public and private sector bodies, regional associations, faith communities, youth groups and educational institutions, and an online survey at togetherfor-caricom.gov.bm. The town hall series concluded with the final session held last week in St. George's.

Madam Deputy Speaker, across the engagement, the Ministry has heard supportive views, undecided views and opposed views. The questions raised most often concern the cost of membership, the protection of Bermuda's immigration and economic frameworks, and [the] tangible return on a deeper regional position, all of which the Ministry has sought to advance and also reply in detail. The Ministry has also tracked every concern, and its intention is to capture the feedback and its summary and all elements of the consultation as part of the forward published White Paper.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as the country will recall, this PLP Government has been open and transparent with the intention to pursue full membership in CARICOM, and with that commitment, the Ministry of Home Affairs has advanced this important public policy discussion.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the ties that bind Bermuda to the Caribbean predate every policy paper. They begin at the water. The same Atlantic that brought our ancestors here brought their ancestors there. The same hands that worked Bermudian land worked Caribbean land. The same names that appear in our parish registers also appear in theirs. Madam Deputy Speaker, our community carries Caribbean ancestry in its bones, and the question before us is not whether Bermuda is connected to the Caribbean, but rather if it values its development enough to stand not just in title but in work, alongside other developed nations.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the journey to this moment is not sudden. It has been a steady walk. The Caribbean Community was founded in 1973 by the Treaty of Chaguaramas. Bermuda joined as an associate member, as this Honourable House has heard, in 2003, and for more than 20 years Bermuda has been on the margins of regionalism, believing that we have meaningfully contributed. We have provided and spoken without voting, and we have been counted without our perspective truly being weighed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas, signed in 2001, opens up with a preamble that sets the guiding framework for the association. It defines a commitment to deepening regional economic integration, a commitment to sustained economic development built on international competitiveness, commitment to coordinating economic and foreign policies, commitment to functional cooperation, and a commitment to enhance trade and economic relations. These are the operating principles under which Bermuda was seeking to deepen its participation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, since the release of the Green Paper, the Ministry has engaged in a deliberate cross-section of Bermuda. The following

stakeholder consultations have been completed and are scheduled before the close of this phase: We have held three public town hall meetings held in the central, west, and east parishes; meetings with Bermuda College and their senior executives; executive teams of the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce; OUTBermuda; Barritt's Bermuda; and the Association of Bermuda International Companies [ABIC]. In each engagement, the Ministry has presented the Green Paper, answered questions, and recorded views for the record.

Madam Deputy Speaker, parallel to the stakeholder consultations, the Ministry has rolled out a public education campaign across digital platforms, broadcast media, and community venues. *The Story of Us* has reached households, business owners, and community institutions across the Island. Business owners have named the benefits of the regional market access. Educators have named the benefit of regional academic mobility. Cultural institutions have named the benefit of regional artistic exchange.

But, Madam Deputy Speaker, the campaign has carried interviews with counterparts from other British Overseas Territories, those same counterparts who have shared their intentions to deepen integration themselves with CARICOM, and to follow the path that Bermuda is now walking. The region is moving, and Bermuda is not moving alone, or not seeking to move alone.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while the Ministry educates, informs, and listens, it also notes the messages of division that have surfaced each time the country seems to seek to advance. The Omnibus Survey records that 53 per cent of Bermudians were in support of CARICOM in 2024. The same voices that work to shape opinion against full membership also insist on an unnecessary referendum. They trade in speculation about economic, social, and constitutional consequences that the Green Paper has already addressed.

Madam Deputy Speaker, there is a disparity in this debate that deserves to be named, that there are Bermudian companies that have already expanded quietly through the Caribbean region. They have opened offices in regional capitals, they have moved goods across regional ports, and they have built service lines across market access. They have done all of this while sharing the value of regional access. Yet some of those same operators have spoken privately to [the] Government about the value of that access, and then turned to the public, however, to spread mistruths about CARICOM.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Ministry will not name them today, but the record speaks for itself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, that disparity carries a deeper pattern, and that is the inherent desire in some quarters to confuse and to deter ordinary Bermudians from accessing the very value that a small

number of well-placed actors have been already unlocking exponentially. That pattern is not new in this country. It is a pattern that has kept opportunity narrow for generations. This Government is committed to widening the gate, not to guarding it for the few.

Madam Deputy Speaker, on the question of tangible return, the consultation has surfaced concrete evidence, but invites the declaration of policy which informs laws, the way that we evolve in governance that to date we have not successfully advanced. We heard in our consultations of vehicles procured for the Royal Bermuda Regiment from Jamaica that were sourced cheaper than the average price, and the equivalent prices in the US and other jurisdictions. That is just one purchase, and the savings speak plainly. The Caribbean Community's [25] by 2025 regional food production agreement, led by Guyana and partner states, is exactly the kind of supply arrangement Bermuda is shut out of as an associate Member. Bermuda imports roughly 90 per cent of its food, and a seat and an ability to have a decision in food and regional security is not abstract. It matters to grocery bills, and it matters to Bermudians.

Madam Deputy Speaker, fear has travelled alongside this debate for generations. The fearmongering that has surfaced draws on that inheritance. It tells Bermudians that free movement would overwhelm us. It tells Bermudians that [Caribbean Single Market and Economy] (CSME) will compromise our economy, and it tells Bermudians that full members will erode our sovereignty and shake our constitutional order. None of those claims [withstand] the Green Paper, and none of those claims withstand the record of associate membership. They are the same warnings, dressed in new language with new actors, that have been used in this country before to keep Bermuda separate from their natural family.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government refuses to govern by inherited fear. We respect every honest concern, and we will answer every honest question. We will not let old posture decide new generational future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, let the record be precise about what full membership does and does not change. Bermuda retains full control over its borders. Bermuda retains its work permit system. Bermuda will not adopt free movement of persons under the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, and this is a Government-settled negotiating position.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the precedent is real, and it is working. The Bahamas has been a full member of CARICOM for 43 years. Across those decades, The Bahamas has had strict national control over its immigration and its financial services sector. A full member can guard its borders and its economy, and this is the same negotiating frame that applies to Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the cost has been plainly spoken about loudly, so let it be spoken about accurately. Bermuda's anticipated contribution as a full

member, anticipated contribution, is \$2.28 million. And that is circulated in public commentary as a theoretical maximum for a member adopting the full Treaty of Chaguaramas and the full Single Market and Economy. This is not the path that Bermuda is on. Bermuda's contribution remains subject to the terms and negotiations of the Government and the CARICOM Member states.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public consultation on the Green Paper closes on Sunday, 31 May [2026]. Until that date, members of the public may review the Green Paper, complete the survey, and submit feedback through the dedicated portal at togetherfor-caricom.gov.bm.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Every submission received will be reviewed by the Ministry.

And, Madam Deputy Speaker, should this step advance, the decision should not rest . . . does not rest with Bermuda alone. Each Member State of the Caribbean community will need to accept Bermuda's application. That is a standard extension process under the path of the Treaty, and the Ministry has engaged regional partners in that spirit.

Madam Deputy Speaker, at the close of the consultation phase, the Ministry will review the feedback from the public, from the Legal Affairs Committee in the Secretariat, and from the United Kingdom. The Ministry will then prepare the White Paper that sets the Government's settled position. That White Paper will incorporate the consultation feedback and the legal review of the Treaty reservations identified for Bermuda's specific constitutional circumstances. Final terms remain subject to negotiation with the CARICOM Secretariat, to the agreement of all full members of the Community. The White Paper will be tabled thereafter in this Honourable House for the consideration of every Member.

Madam Deputy Speaker, some have asked why the Government pursues a regional position while families face the cost of living at home. The answer is that the Government can do both. A responsible Government can invest in health care, in affordable housing, in education, in social protections, in infrastructure, in cost of living [relief], and in job creation through the Ministry of Finance and the annual budget. The regional engagement runs along that domestic delivery. It does not compete with it. Responsible Government carries both at once.

Hon. E. David Burt: Yes.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: In closing, Madam Deputy Speaker, this Government thanks the community for engaging during this consultation meaningfully, and we will continue to receive feedback at togetherfor-caricom.gov.bm and invite members of the public to submit their feedback by May 31st.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I believe you have a second paper, Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I do.

The Deputy Speaker: You can have a drink of water first.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: You are too kind, Madam Deputy Speaker.

SPACE AND SATELLITE ADVISORY PANEL, RECONSTITUTION OF

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, I also rise today to update this Honourable House on the work being advanced by the Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Department of Energy, to reconstitute Bermuda's Space and Satellite Advisory Panel.

This work represents another step forward in the Government's commitment to economic diversification, regulatory innovation, and long-term strategic planning for Bermuda's future.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Honourable Members of this House may recall that Bermuda previously undertook a strategic initiative to position itself within the global space and satellite industry through the development of the Bermuda National Space Strategy [2020-]2025, supported by an earlier Space and Satellite Advisory Panel. This work established a clear vision for Bermuda to leverage its strengths in regulation, insurance, and international partnerships to participate meaningfully in the growing global space economy.

The strategy identified key opportunity areas, including satellite communications, earth observation, and space insurance, and established strategic pillars focused on policy development, domestic capacity building, international engagement, and the utilisation of Bermuda's orbital resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, shortly after the development of the strategy, the global COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted its intended implementation. The previous Advisory Panel, which played a central role in shaping the strategy and guiding its earlier momentum, was unable to reconvene as planned. As a result, many of the initiatives envisioned under the 2020-2025 framework, including deeper industry engagement, regulatory advancement, and capacity building efforts, were not fully realised.

Now, in 2026, this Ministry is taking a deliberate step to reconstitute and to build on that earlier foundation. The reconstitution of the Space and Satellite Advisory Panel represents not a restart but a continuation of a modernisation of that original vision, one that

reflects both the lessons learned and the evolving realities of the global space economy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda has had a long history of contributing significantly to highly specialised international industries. Our jurisdiction has established a reputation for strong regulations, solid governance, financial services, insurance knowledge, and global connections. These are not abstract strengths. However, they are practical advantages that Bermuda can use to compete in new and developing industries with purpose, discipline, and credibility.

Opportunities in satellite communications, earth observation, space, finance, insurance, data services, research and development, and new technologies are all contributing to the rapid expansion of the global space economy. Bermuda must therefore be deliberate in determining where we can engage, where we can collaborate, and where we can provide lasting value for our people.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the global space economy is already valued at over \$600 billion and is projected to exceed \$1 trillion in the coming decades. That is not a distant or speculative market. It reflects a rapidly expanding commercial sector with tangible opportunities today.

For Bermuda, the opportunity is not theoretical, but the opportunity focuses on areas where we already have a competitive advantage, including insurance, financial services, and regulatory frameworks. Bermuda is well-positioned to capture a meaningful share of this growth and unlock new high-value economic activity for the Island.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that we have received and approved the proposed membership of the Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, enabling the Panel to be formally constituted and commence [its] important work. This goes beyond simply reestablishing the committee. And the target group will work on the development of the revised space strategy and ensure that the direction is guided by best practices, commercial realities, and Bermuda's domestic contacts. This will also support and connect to local workforce development and connect to our space policy.

The Panel will include:

- Doug Little, Chair of the UKspace and Professor in Practice at the University of Surrey;
- Colin Baldwin, Executive Director of the UKspace and former Head of the Local Growth Strategy at the UK Space Agency, who has experience in national strategy, cluster development, and startup support;
- Libby Jackson, [OBE FRAeS] Head of Space at the Science Museum and former European Space Agency Flight Director and Head of Space Exploration with the UK Space Agency;
- Mr. [Sanjeev] Gordhan, General Partner of One Ventures, who will contribute specialist

knowledge on venture capital investment frameworks and mobilisation of private capital;

- Keith Ryden, Director of Surrey Space Centre; and
- Dr. Joanna Hart, Director of Space Partnerships, who will provide expertise in investment, again, cluster development, and workforce initiatives.

The Bermuda representatives on the Panel include:

- Fiona Beck, Independent Director and former Bermuda Business Development Agency Director with experience in digital infrastructure, subsea cables, and international connectivity;
- Craig Swan, Chief Executive Officer of the Bermuda Monetary Authority, whose experience is in financial regulation, insurance supervision, and policy; and
- Mr. Philip J. Perinchief, Attorney-at-Law and former Attorney General of Bermuda.

Madam Deputy Speaker, collectively, this panel provides comprehensive coverage across key areas of Bermuda, and they are each willing to participate meaningfully in the global space economy. These include capital and economics, commercialisation and local industry alignment.

The Panel will operate under a structured framework, and this will include two plenary sessions supported by thematic working groups focused on priority areas such as earth stations, spectrums, small satellites, space insurance, and emerging technologies.

The Panel is supported by subcommittees that will organise its work, prepare materials, and coordinate meetings to ensure that the findings are captured clearly in Bermuda's updated National Space Strategy.

The updates and outputs in the report will ensure expert recommendations, a roadmap that sets out Bermuda's priorities, and will allow for us to move from the opportunity to implementation.

Madam Deputy Speaker, earth stations are one of the priority themes assigned to the panel's working groups, which is deliberate. The panel's expertise will inform the Government's review of the consultative responses, and the next steps will follow.

A key area, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the International Telecommunications Union orbital slots. These assets require careful policy considerations and strategic engagement if they are to be properly leveraged.

This work also supports Bermuda's ambition to become a leading jurisdiction for space finance. Bermuda already has a respected risk capital ecosystem, a sophisticated insurance and reinsurance market, and a financial services sector known for innovation and regulatory strength. These strengths will be applied to the space sector to attract new investment, create opportunities, and support new insurance [and] risk [solutions].

We are pleased to be part of the economic diversification, and through the reconstitution of the Space and Satellite Advisory Panel, we believe this to be a critical step in positioning Bermuda as a credible and competitive participant in the global space economy.

I look forward to updating this Honourable House as the work of the Panel progresses and we move towards the development of Bermuda's updated National Space Strategy.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the Minister [for] the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation.

Minister, you have the floor.

GROW LOCAL

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise today to highlight the launch of the [Grow Local initiative](#) by the Department of Planning, developed in collaboration with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the agricultural industry has long played an important role in Bermuda's history, culture, and resilience. However, over many decades, agricultural activity has experienced a steady decline, which has made us increasingly reliant on imported food and more vulnerable to supply chain disruptions, extreme weather events, and international price volatility.

Madam Deputy Speaker, according to the information held in the planning system, Bermuda currently has approximately 737 acres of designated agricultural land. However, only half of this is currently being used for agricultural purposes, meaning that we have a substantial capacity to increase local crop production.

Madam Deputy Speaker, during the preparation of developing plans, the Department of Planning receives multiple requests for the removal of protective agricultural designations in the interest of maximising the development potential of land. While it is recognised people will naturally seek to maximise the value of land within their ownership, one of the principal rationales offered in support of requests for the removal of agricultural reserve designations is the belief that there is no demand for agricultural land, due to the decline in the industry.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this assertion is in contrast to the experience of officers within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources who receive multiple inquiries each month from people looking for land to farm. Such requests are not only from existing commercial farmers but from individuals looking to establish themselves in the sector, as well as those

looking for small plots for domestic-scale crop production.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Grow Local Initiative has been developed to address this disconnect. Central to the initiative is an online platform which seeks to connect willing landowners with protective farmers to maximise farming opportunities across the Island. Through the platform, landowners will be able to market land within their ownership which they are willing to make available for farming opportunities, prospective farmers will be able to view details of available sites, and the Department will be able to make landowners aware of any inquiries received and make the necessary connections.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important to highlight that the platform is a facilitation tool and any decisions regarding the use of that land within private ownership shall remain entirely at the discretion of the landowner. Any subsequent arrangements or agreements will be at the discretion of the participants.

The initiative will not be restricted to designated agricultural sites but any sites suitable for farming purposes would be included. Furthermore, I would like to make clear that any sites which enter into this initiative which do not have an agricultural reserve designation will not be designated as Agricultural Reserve through this process. The aim is not to rezone, only to explore the potential.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government has previously confirmed the preparation of an Integrated Agricultural Strategy for the Island, which states objectives for the emerging strategy, including:

- the need to make better use of technology to improve domestic food production;
- explore the means of making land more available for production; and
- encouraging greater participation in the agricultural structure.

The Grow Local Initiative directly supports these objectives and will play a complementary role in the advancement of that strategy.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I do believe that we need to think of more creative ways of boosting local food production, and while there has been some local traction in relation to alternative farming techniques, there is clearly still a place for traditional crop farming in Bermuda, and I hope the Grow Local platform will assist in increasing the supply of land available for farming.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to conclude my Statement by encouraging members of the community to view the Grow Local initiative as an opportunity to participate in a collective national effort that can deliver meaningful long-term benefits for Bermuda.

Increasing local food production is directly connected to food security, public health, environmental sustainability and our long-term resilience as an Island community. Greater access to fresh and locally grown produce benefits all of us while also helping to reduce

our reliance on costly and often lower-quality imported food.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I believe that Bermuda possesses both the land and the people necessary to help strengthen our domestic food supply, and I hope that the Grow Local initiative will help connect more members of our community with agriculture.

For further details of the Grow Local initiative, please visit the Department of Planning website at planning.gov.bm.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the Minister of Public Works.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENT, STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT THROUGH

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I rise this morning to inform this Honourable House of the Government's intention to purchase the Compass Point Building located on 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke, as part of a broader effort to modernise government operations, reduce long-term rental costs, improve public service delivery and [strengthen the Government's long-term financial position](#).

At its core, this proposal is about a simple principle: the Government should spend taxpayer funds responsibly, operate efficiently and build long-term public value wherever possible.

Madam Deputy Speaker, Government office accommodation is currently spread across a combination of government-owned buildings and privately leased commercial space, primarily within the City of Hamilton. This fragmented arrangement creates inefficiencies, increases costs, limits coordination between departments, and makes it more difficult for the public to access services.

At the same time, the Government continues to spend substantial sums each year on commercial rent without creating a lasting public asset in return. In the 2026/27 financial year alone, projected spending on commercial rent is expected to approach \$11 million, excluding utilities and service charges. Madam Deputy Speaker, that is a significant recurring expense.

Leasing will always have a role to play. However, continuing indefinitely with this level of dependence on private rental accommodation is neither financially sustainable nor operationally efficient. We are equally mindful that every dollar spent on rent is a dollar not directed towards roads, housing, public services or other national priorities.

It is also important that the Government plans are not only for today's pressures but for the future as well. For that reason, the Notice of Motion I will put before this Honourable House later today is not simply

about acquiring office space. It is part of a broader strategy to modernise the way the Government operates, improve working environments for public offices, and create infrastructure that supports more effective service delivery over the long term.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the public should know that as part of our analysis, the Government looked into several options, including constructing a new government office complex. However, it was determined that a project of that scale would require a substantial upfront investment and several years of planning, approvals, procurement, and construction before becoming operational. During that time, the Government would still be required to maintain its existing lease accommodation and continue paying millions annually in rental costs while awaiting completion. For those reasons, constructing a new facility is not considered the most timely or cost-effective solution to the issue before us.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the proposal being advanced is practical and immediate in its impact. The Compass Point Building provides over 81,000 square feet of structurally sound office space, supported by reliable infrastructure, backup power capacity, and the ability to create synergies by accommodating multiple interconnected government departments under one roof.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is not simply about moving departments into a new building. When departments that work closely together are located in one place, coordination improves, services become more streamlined, delays can be reduced and members of the public are better able to access government services without navigating multiple locations.

This strategy also creates an important opportunity for the Government to address the condition of ageing public buildings. The purchase of the Compass Point [Building] will create the swing space necessary for the Government to temporarily relocate departments from older facilities, allowing comprehensive refurbishment works to begin on those ageing buildings.

In many cases, major renovations cannot be completed effectively while buildings remain occupied and operational. The additional swing space will create capacity for the Government to fully vacate certain ageing facilities, undertake major modernisation works more efficiently and return departments to improved working environments once renovations are complete.

Madam Deputy Speaker, public officers should be able to work in safe, modern and functional environments that support quality public service delivery and reflect the value we place on the people who serve this country every day. Improving the condition of government buildings is part of improving the quality of government itself.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the negotiated purchase price for the Compass Point Building is \$14.5 million. Independent advice has been considered as part of this process, and the Government is satisfied

that the agreed price reflects fair market value. However, it is worth noting that the decision is not based on purchase price alone. The broader consideration is long-term financial sustainability. By consolidating departments into this facility, the Government expects to reduce private rental costs by at least \$2 million annually, in addition to operational efficiencies associated with the shared infrastructure, utilities and support services.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I recognise that this represents a significant investment. But the alternative is to continue spending millions of taxpayer dollars year after year on rent while maintaining a system that we already know is fragmented and inefficient.

This proposal takes a different approach. It is about operating more efficiently, improving access to government services, and reducing long-term costs to taxpayers. Most importantly, it is about creating greater financial flexibility for the Government to invest in the priorities Bermudians care about most, such as infrastructure, public services, housing, and other community needs.

Madam Deputy Speaker, no single decision will resolve every challenge facing this country. However, responsible decisions made consistently over time place governments in a stronger position to meet those challenges effectively.

This proposal is intended to do exactly that. It is a practical step, a considered step, and I believe a responsible step in the best interest of the people of Bermuda.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I call on the Minister of Health. Minister, you have the floor.

MENTAL HEALTH ANTI-STIGMA MONTH, ENDING THE SILENCE—REFLECTIONS ON

Hon. Kim N. Wilson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As [Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month](#) comes to a close, I rise today not only to reflect on the progress we have made throughout May, but to reaffirm this Government's sustained efforts to reduce stigma, expand access to care, and invest in the mental well-being of the people of Bermuda.

Mental health affects every family, every workplace, every school, and every community in this country. Yet, for far too long, stigma has prevented too many people from seeking the support they need. As the Minister of Health, I want to be clear: this Government is committed to building a Bermuda where asking for help is seen as a sign of strength, not weakness; where mental wellness is treated with the same urgency and compassion as physical health; and where no person feels isolated because of their mental health challenges.

Throughout this month, Madam Deputy Speaker, Bermuda demonstrated once again that when we speak openly about mental health, we create safer, healthier, and more connected communities.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this year's programme was one of the most active and collaborative to date. We began in Victoria Park, where partners from across the Island joined us to launch the month and highlight the importance of early intervention, education, and open dialogue. From that moment, the momentum continued and carried through every week, with meaningful conversations and community engagements taking place across the Island.

One of the most impactful events was the Youth Mental Health Debate, where young people explored the balance between privacy, autonomy, and parental involvement in accessing care. Their thoughtful and courageous contributions reflected the real-world challenges young people face today and reinforced the importance of creating systems that both protect their rights and support families. Their leadership continues to help shape our work on youth mental health reform, and I commend them for using their voices to challenge stigma and encourage understanding among their peers.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also want to recognise the outstanding contribution of CedarBridge Academy, whose Vibe Tribe Mental Health Awareness Committee led a full week of student-designed activities focused on emotional well-being, peer support, creative expression, and honest conversations about mental health. What these students demonstrated is exactly what we need more of in Bermuda, young people leading with empathy, openness, and courage. Their efforts are helping to normalise conversations around mental health and create environments where students feel safe to speak up and seek support.

We also hosted a Youth Mental Health Town Hall at the Bermuda College, focusing on digital wellness and the impact of social media on mental health and relationships. Local experts shared valuable insights into how digital platforms influence emotional well-being and discussed practical strategies to support healthier online habits and healthier connections. These conversations were essential, particularly as we continue to navigate the growing mental health impact associated with cyberbullying, social media, and digital pressures affecting our young people.

We will conclude our Anti-Stigma Month celebration at our annual Move More Games on the 19th of June 2026, where this year and in the years ahead, the integration of physical and mental wellness will remain a key priority. As part of the celebration, we will recognise mental health advocates from across the community whose dedication continues to break down stigma and promote wellness for all. The Ministry is proud to honour and celebrate these individuals at the Move More Games.

Madam Deputy Speaker, while awareness is critically important, awareness alone is not enough. It must be matched by action and investment. That is why in the 2025 mid-year budget review, the Government committed \$2.29 million to strengthen Bermuda's comprehensive mental health support programme. This investment expanded access to counselling and therapeutic services to organisations, including the Family Centre, Age Concern, the Women's Resource Centre, MASC, and the Youth Mental Health Plan delivered through the Bermuda College Foundation.

This investment reflects our belief that there is no health without mental health. It also reflects our commitment to ensuring that every resident has access to timely, affordable, compassionate, and stigma-free care.

Madam Deputy Speaker, reducing stigma requires more than policy. It requires people coming together with compassion, honesty, and a willingness to support one another.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the Bermuda Hospitals Board and the Mid-Atlantic Wellness Institute, the Family Centre, Solstice, the Department of Education, Bermuda College, and Bermuda Mental Health Foundation, Mindful Employer Bermuda, and Simply Bloom, and all of our partners whose leadership and collaboration made this month a success.

Madam Deputy Speaker, although Mental Health Anti-Stigma Month may be ending, our work certainly does not end here. This Government remains committed to expanding access to care, strengthening services, modernising mental health legislation, and continuing to invest in the organisations and professionals who support Bermudans every single day.

Together, let us continue building a Bermuda where stigma has no place, where mental wellness is embraced as a shared national priority, and where every person feels seen, supported, and empowered to seek help without fear or shame.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: And before we move on, I would like to acknowledge that sitting in our Gallery is a fellow MP from the UK jurisdiction, and his name is MP Calum Anderson. Let's give him a Bermuda welcome. Yes

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Deputy Speaker: There are several questions on the Order Paper that we will look at first, and then I have several persons wishing to ask Ministers questions.

So, let's start with the questions on the Order Paper.

Premier, you have questions before you, and I will ask Dr. DeCouto for the oral question to read his question.

QUESTION 1: SUGAR TAX REVENUE TO DATE (BY FINANCIAL YEAR) SINCE 2017

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and good morning to you.

Will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please provide for this Honourable House the total Government revenue from the sugar tax (customs duty on sugar), to date, broken out by financial year since 2017?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The figures provided by the Customs . . . sorry, let me start by saying the figures that the Honourable Member requested up to fiscal year 2019/20 are already in the public domain and will not be answered.

The amounts for the sugar tax, of course, it is important to note the difference between the baseline tax on sugar and the increase which was done, and those are the figures that I will provide.

- Fiscal year 2020/21, \$6,226,412.
- Following fiscal year, \$6,590,721.
- The next fiscal year, \$6,283,629.
- The following fiscal year, \$7,402,494.
- The following fiscal year, \$7,380,561.
- And fiscal year 2025/2026, \$7,996,075.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any supplementaries for that question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you.

Will the Honourable Premier advise if any of these funds have been earmarked for specific health-related initiatives?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government of Bermuda has spent a significant amount of money on health-related initiatives, including the expansion of universal health care, and all of those come from the revenue sources that have been created by this Government.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Second supplementary?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker. Are there policies or procedures to ensure that these sugar taxes are only passed on to the consumers who actually buy products containing the sugar?
Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: We have revised the sugar tax to make sure that it applies to products that are of high sugar content, and those particular matters, as the Honourable Member knows, were done, I think a few years ago, when he was in the Senate.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Shall we move to the second question? Oh, sorry. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary.
Considering the answers that the Premier . . . and good morning, Deputy Speaker, and to the public, and to all of us.

The Deputy Speaker: And good morning to you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Considering the numbers that are stated, besides one or two, there is an incremental increase. Is that an indication that it is not working? Since retail, in many cases, has been down, that the actual tax is going up that we are receiving on the sugar tax, is that an indicator? Has it been looked at as an indicator that maybe it is not as effective as we thought?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member's assumptions are incorrect. It should be noted that customs duty is ad valorem, which means charging the value. And as the Honourable Member would know, there have been significant increases in the prices of these things in the global markets due to international trends.

However, volume figures can be provided if the Honourable Member does . . . as has been stated in the House, there has been a volume change on a number

of these particular matters, and those things have been reported.

But I think it is important to note, and I think we hear this, we want to talk about health insurance, we want to talk about other things. The reality is—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: —that sugar, and high concentrations of sugar, and these types of things materially impact the cost of health insurance, [and] materially impact the amounts of non-communicable diseases in the country. The Government has put forward this policy, and the Opposition should determine whether or not they want people with more diabetes in the country, or whether or not . . . or whether or not . . . That can be their position, Madam Deputy Speaker, but we have set out where our position is.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Are there any further supplementary questions?
There being none, question two.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, you are living in a cloud, bye.

[Laughter]

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT DIGITAL ASSET INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

With regard to the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance's recent public statement that "Cabinet has approved a framework to allow the Government of Bermuda to accept and invest in digital assets within a clear regulatory structure," will the Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance please inform this Honourable House on the details of that framework?

Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I want him to repeat that answer—

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 17(9)(a)(viii), I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement I gave earlier today.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your Point of Order.

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House because the Statement did not, in fact, answer the question of the framework. It was very general and did not advise what the framework approved by Cabinet was.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

An Hon. Member: Slippery, man.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have any further answer?

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 17(9)(a)(viii), I refer the Honourable Member to the Statement I gave earlier today.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: That's two non-answers.

The Deputy Speaker: Question three is [for a] written [response]. Did you receive the written response?

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 18 of the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly, as was written to you, I did write for permission to defer question three to the next day of meeting, and you did confirm that that was done.

The Deputy Speaker: I wrote it wrong, deferment by the wrong thing. Thank you. Yes, he did. Thank you.

That moves us to the questions for Junior Minister Lister. For the first question, they were all [for] written [responses]. Did you receive the responses?

Thank you.

Hon. Ben Smith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I just received them.

QUESTIONS: PORT ROYAL PRIMARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINARY MATTER

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please state for this Honourable House the specific statutory provision(s) of the Education Act or any regulations relied upon to justify her intervention in a disciplinary matter at Port Royal Primary School?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House whether her intervention was issued as a formal directive, and if so, whether that directive was made in writing or recorded in any official Ministry file?

Hon. Ben Smith: Will the Honourable Minister please confirm for this Honourable House the established appeal process for student disciplinary matters was followed in this case, and if not, the basis on which it was set aside?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

For the second set of questions for the same Junior Minister, they have been deferred due to the absence of the Minister, the PS, and relevant technical officers. So, they have been deferred to be answered to you. There were no answers. They could not get any answers. And they have been off Island for a considerable amount of time. Okay.

That moves us to the written questions for Minister Hayward. They are all written questions, but I want to inform the House that for question number one, that was disallowed.

So, did you receive written responses for question two and three?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Michael Fahy: I have received an answer. Thank you.

QUESTION: CARICOM, WORK PERMITS HELD BY MEMBER NATIONALS

[Disallowed—Standing Order 17(5)(g)(xiii)]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the number of nationals from CARICOM member states who currently hold valid work permits in Bermuda broken down by (i) nationality; (ii) work permit length; (i.e., one, two, three, four, five year or temporary work permits) (iii) job category for which the permit relates; and (iv) the overall percentage of work permits currently valid in Bermuda that are held by nationals from CARICOM member states?

QUESTION: CARICOM, MINISTERIAL MEETINGS ON IMMIGRATION

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the number of meetings whether in person or by electronic means that he has had with Ministers from CARICOM member states for substantive discussions on immigration matters over the last 36 months, broken down by date, place and identity of the relevant Minister/CARICOM member states?

QUESTION: CARICOM, NUMBER OF BERMUDIANS EMIGRATING TO CARICOM MEMBER STATES—36 MONTH BREAKDOWN

Hon. Michael Fahy: Will the Honourable Minister please advise this Honourable House of the

number of Bermudian nationals who have emigrated to CARICOM member states in the last 36 months, broken down by numbers and the CARICOM member state to which the Bermudian emigrated?

Hon. Michael Fahy: But was unaware that question one was disallowed until now.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Well, I did ask that you be notified, sir.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Yesterday. Yes.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Can we receive further information as to why those questions have been denied?

The Deputy Speaker: According to Standing Order 17, and I cannot remember which one it is right off my head. A very cogent and I think valid response was given regarding that because of the type of information, and I can allow the . . . okay, thank you.

So, it would look at 17,500 different documents, and the Ministry currently does not capture the information in a way that would allow for them to readily be able to give you responses. And in fact, I would say that the Ministry made it clear that it would take them months to even try and collate the information, and by the end of that, you still may not have an accurate report because things probably will have changed.

So, Standing Order 17(5)(g)(xiii). So, you can have a look at that. I disallowed the question.

Thank you.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you for the clarification, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Okay.

So that takes us to the questions for Minister Adams, and they are oral questions, so I ask Mr. King to write *[sic]* his questions . . . read his questions.

QUESTION 1: GREENLAND FARM, ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCES

Mr. Robert King: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker, Members of this Honourable House, and the listening public.

The question that I have for the Honourable Minister [is], Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what enforcement measures to date have been executed against the Greenland Farm for the chronic issues related to the farm's operations, including sewage runoff onto and to neighbouring properties and homes, and noxious odours emanating from

the farm, which negatively impact the surrounding community?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Good morning again, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources [DENR] has taken several steps to address concerns related to the operations of the named farm that sit within its remit.

DENR issued a warning letter last year under the Water Resources Act 1975 regarding their disposal of manure. DENR has been working with the farm operators and the Ministry's Waste Management section to ensure transfer of manure to the Marsh Folly Composting Facility occurs more frequently, as reducing the volume in the manure pit is expected to help lessen odour concerns.

It should be noted that complaints regarding odour at the site are not currently monitored by the Ministry of Public Works and Environment. The farm owners have also completed works along the northern boundary of the property, including berms and drainage trenches, which thus far appear to have helped reduce storm water runoff during recent periods of heavy rainfall. The farm owners are continuing to assess longer-term drainage solutions for the area.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Any supplementaries to this question?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Can the Honourable Minister explain to this Honourable House why, despite long-standing complaints, documented environmental concerns, sewage runoff, and persistent odour issues, the Government has apparently failed to fully enforce its own environmental regulations, public health standards, and lease conditions against this tenant? The tenant has a lease on government land. And there is clear evidence that it has been in violation of that lease, but to date, to my knowledge and to the knowledge of the constituents, no meaningful action to hold them to account has taken place.

Thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I just named off a number of actions that the Government is working in collaboration with the owners of the farm to address the said matters.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further supplementary questions?

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary, yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Would the Honourable Minister accept that the warning letters and the measures taken to date by [the] Government have not meaningfully and appropriately addressed the problem with the operators of the farm as the problems continue?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Robert King: And have continued for more than seven years.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I refer to my comments earlier, and I will go back to this. DENR has been working with the farm owners . . . sorry, the farm owners have also completed works along the northern boundary of the property, including berms and drainage trenches, which thus far appears to have helped reduce storm water runoff during recent periods of heavy rainfall.

So, work has been done, and we are beginning to see progress of said works.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Question two?

QUESTION 2: GREENLAND FARM, ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS CONCERNING ENVIRONMENTAL NUISANCES

Mr. Robert King: Thank you. Will the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House what public funds and resources, if any, are being utilised to remedy the chronic environmental problems caused by the privately operated dairy farm?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Once again, I thank the Honourable Member for his question.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will say that no public funds or resources have been used to address this matter. It remains a private matter, and it is the responsibility of the farm owners to ensure compliance with all applicable environmental regulations as required by their leasing agreement.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Robert King: Supplementary.

If that be the case, Honourable Minister, why was there a proposal sent out to the public for manure remediation efforts? A proposal was sent out by [the]

Government to the public for a private provider to provide services to address that problem.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, I stand by my first comment. No public funds have been used to address any of these matters that he is referring to . . . the Honourable Member is referring to, sorry.

Every progress that we have done thus far has been taken on by the responsibility of the farm owners.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Can the Minister then explain why the proposal was sent out for a private provider to provide remediation works?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: The RFP that the Honourable Member is referring to was simply to assist the farm owners by finding an appropriate provider to do their services.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

That was your second supplementary. Yes. Thank you.

That moves us now on to the Ministerial Statements for today.

First up is a question for the Premier by the Member Doug, I am sorry, by the Member from constituency 25.

QUESTION 1: DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And since the Premier purports that his Statement would have answered my submitted questions, I am sure many of the follow-on topics I had in mind to discuss will definitely be applicable here. So, I look forward to his answers.

With respect to the statement that digital assets might be invested in by some of the public funds, which funds does the Premier, and the Government, anticipate investing in these digital assets, and what sort of amounts and types of these assets does he anticipate?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. [Answer?]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, the funds that the Government allows are managed under the Public Funds Act. When amendments are brought under the Public Funds Act, we will have plenty of time

to debate said funds, but it should be noted that those are managed under the Public Funds Investment Committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker, is it the case that the Premier does not have any idea how he intends to invest digital assets and that the Public Funds Investment Committee has not yet been consulted on this topic, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, first of all, that is not a question, as you would well know, and the Honourable Member should make sure that he has his—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

Hon. E. David Burt: What is your point of order?

[Inaudible interjection]

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I went to elementary school, Madam Deputy Speaker. I know what a question is.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: But what is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Has the Premier . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: —not consulted the Public Funds Investment Committee about this topic yet?

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And the point of order is: is he misleading the House? Because I asked a question.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: You were going to —

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I sincerely hope as we get started in this wonderful session

today, especially as we have visitors from overseas, that the Honourable Members will conduct themselves in accordance with Standing Orders.

Because here is the reality, Madam Deputy Speaker. He has the ability to ask the questions, and I have the ability to answer the questions. I may not like his questions, but I must answer. He may not like my answers, but I must give them. So here we go —

[Laughter and general uproar]

Hon. E. David Burt: He may not like them, but I am going to give the answers. I will wait for him to calm down so he can hear.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, Members, let me hear the answer to his first —

Hon. E. David Burt: So again, Madam Deputy Speaker,

The Deputy Speaker: —supplementary question.

Hon. E. David Burt:—that was not a question that was trying to say, *Is X, Y, and Z happening?* But let me explain to the Honourable Member. It is very simple and clear.

The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Public Funds Act. As my Statement clearly said, if the Honourable Member went to elementary school—

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: —so surely, he has the ability to read what the Statement says. It says that there are digital representations of the same assets which are done, and it would be arguable that those things cannot be invested in.

However, the reality is that these funds are managed under the Public Funds Act. So, if the Public Funds Act right now, they have X, Y, and Z in treasuries, and they want to have Treasury bills and all the other things, and they can do that in digital form, which may be more efficient.

The Honourable Member is apparently trying to fish for something. If he wants to ask a specific question, he should probably ask so.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

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

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is imputing improper motive. Nobody is fishing. I am here exercising my duties, and he still has not answered the question.
Thank you.

An Hon. Member: As usual.

Another Hon. Member: As usual.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Member, did you have a second supplementary? I cannot—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Has the Public Funds Investment Committee, which I am sure the Premier has seen the various Minutes and so forth, made any recommendations regarding these sorts of digital assets, that he is aware of?

Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: The answer is no. This is not a—the Public Funds Investment Committee may recommend. He is missing the point.

We are amending the legislation to enable there to be investments in digital assets. If we are going to receive digital assets, then we need to have the propensity or the ability to invest them. Right now, when we get cash . . . just to help the Shadow Minister, when we get cash into the Government, and we have balances, we put them into Treasury bills and other money market securities and other types of things.

And in the future, if we receive stablecoins, we could then put those into the digital representation of the exact same items. This is not a question of consultation with the Public Funds [Investment] Committee. This is a question of upgrading the legislation.

I mean, the Public Treasury (Administration and Payments) Act still has specifications on the types of printing or the types of printers that need to print checks for different things. We are modernising legislation. I am not entirely certain what the Honourable Member is trying to get at.

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have a second question, Member?

QUESTION 2: DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Statement referred to around \$62,000 worth of various digital assets that were distributed to various people at these events. Where did the source of the funding for that \$62,000 come from, i.e., who paid for the digital assets?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: A great question, Madam Deputy Speaker.

It came from the sponsors of the conference, whether it is Circle, Coinbase, Stellar, or Kraken/Payward. They have partners that are coming in, just like last year, where they came in to go ahead and say, *We want to assist the country, we want to show, we want to demonstrate how digital payments adoption works.* Just as last year, it was it. So, to answer the Honourable Member's question, [it is] the companies that did, and not a dime of public money.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Supplementary? Supplementary or third question?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Is this . . . this is a supplementary or third [question]?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I will just speak up, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: By my sophisticated calculations, this is around \$42,000 of unspent digital assets. Are the people who attended these events able to use those in any way?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: The persons have it in their wallets. So, some people from last year saved it. They get money. Others, because the same 30 vendors who were trained, are accepting digital currencies, so they can go to stores and spend them.

So, that is it. The BEDC has them. The BEDC knows the list of people, so they have them. So, for instance, if you receive Kraken xStocks and a gold ETF, you may wish to save that, as if you receive USDC, which automatically compounds interest on a regular and ongoing basis continually. You may wish to save that, or you may wish to spend it.

We have more vendors that are accepting digital currency. We are moving into the space where we are going to get supermarkets work with the Ministry of Home Affairs and other vendors. This is what it is, enabling us to do different things, such as when we are

dealing with financial assistance programmes, et cetera, being able to spread them wider than the two major supermarket chains and others. So, there are a number of things.

But the reality is that persons can retain those monies, they can spend those monies, they can spend them online, they can spend them overseas, they can get virtual credit cards, they can spend it, they can do numerous different things. And I am uncertain if the Honourable Member did attend. I know Members from his party did, but it would be nice if the Honourable Shadow Minister of Finance would have come so he could have learned all these things and did not have to hear them from me at the desk.

[General uproar]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is misleading the House. I know he had his Ray-Bans on, on the day, and was recording the audience. He would have seen me in the audience.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter and clapping]

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: *What's in your wallet?*

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. So, do you have a second supplementary . . . or a third question?

QUESTION 3: DIGITAL FINANCE ADVANCING IN BERMUDA

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I have a third question, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Statement referred to changes in the FinTech Development Fund to make it become more effective. Could the Premier advise what were the issues with this Development Fund? Why has it not been effective for its purposes since it was originally passed?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. E. David Burt: It is not necessarily a question of whether or not it has been effective. The reality is this has been a long journey, Madam Deputy Speaker. And

the history of Bermuda's FinTech journey has been well advertised.

We started, we adjusted strategies, et cetera. We set up things that are in place. Now there are companies such as the ones that are giving these funds for airdrops who want to make sure to share and to promote. We saw the announcement in Davos where between Coinbase and Circle putting up funds, the Stellar Development Foundation has committed funds, but these things are going to be in the form of digital assets. They are not going to be in the form of, you know, fiat currency, and so we have to amend the Act, so we have these types of things.

So, it is not a question of why the Fund did not work. We are modernising it for the time. Before the Fund was just used for to receive funds and for education, other purposes like that. Those donations do not materialise. But now we have commitments on new levels on the things which we are working on with the on-chain economy initiative, et cetera, and so, we need to modify the legislation.

And the other thing, which I think is important, which I hope the Honourable Member will take into account, is that not only are we modifying the legislation to receive digital funds, et cetera, but we are also making sure that we can use these disbursements to help Bermudian companies. The BMA is going to be putting out new legislation regarding payment service providers. In my Statement, I had mentioned that some Bermudians in the past who have tried to go into these businesses have had a challenge. And it is also important for us to be able to support these companies getting set up. Because if we look at digital finance over time, we are eight years in from the legislation being established.

We know in the insurance industry, many of the entrepreneurs are not Bermudian. We want to make sure that people who are working in this industry, who are doing this, who are at the Bermuda College, who are at the Berkeley Institute, have the ability to become entrepreneurs, build their own apps and do things, and provide the avenues to support them. And that is why it's important for the FinTech Development Fund to be modernised.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Any supplementaries? No supplementaries?

Okay, that takes us on to the next Minister. I call on the Member from constituency 7 to put her question to the Minister for Housing.

QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My question from the Statement is really around the \$1,400 rental fee that will be charged for the

tenants that will be going into the property at Mid-dletown.

The Deputy Speaker: Ask your question.

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to know if the rent will be reviewed on an annual basis, or will it remain fixed for a specific period of time?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is always up for review, possibly. But I am sure the Honourable Member will know. I am sure the Honourable Members in this House will know that the Bermuda Housing Corporation's mandate is to provide affordable homes for rent for our people, and that will continue.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Supplementary, please, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: I would like to know what the Housing Corporation's standard review period for their rental property says, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Same answer.

The Deputy Speaker: Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Madam Deputy Speaker, that is not an answer to the question.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker I—, Minister, did you want to elaborate? Just—

An Hon. Member: Rephrase the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Okay.

You are still on your first supplement. Go ahead.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You can rephrase the question for him.

Ms. Robin Tucker: The question was, what is the Bermuda Housing Corporation's review period for looking at their rent and their potential rent increases?

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: As I said, every year.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you. Second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: This is a second supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, yes, sorry. Go ahead.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you. I would like to know if the tenants in that property can expect any other additional built-in costs other than the rent.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, they won't.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Okay, great. Thank you.
A second question, please?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: A second question is, what will they . . . sorry, is there any . . . is it anticipated that other two-bedroom rental accommodations will have the same monthly rent?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: As I said earlier, the Bermuda Housing Corporation has a standard rate that they use for one-, two-, three-, and four-[bedroom units], and that will continue to remain the same throughout the year.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Yes. Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Robin Tucker: Supplemental, please. Yes, thank you.

I would like to know, then, if the Minister will give an undertaking to make those rental fee amounts

... I do not know if they are public. I have not seen them. But if they are not, if the Minister will give an undertaking to make them public.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Those rates have been stated in this House many times. They are on public record, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, please.

[Inaudible interjection]

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, okay. So, I also would like to know what is the maintenance schedule anticipated for these properties that the Government is establishing?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Same as they are for the other 700 homes that we have.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

That is exactly why I asked the question, because we could see that the maintenance schedules have not always been kept up to date.

QUESTION 3: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, if the Minister would not mind telling us what that actual maintenance schedule is, that would be wonderful. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that your third question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: That is my third question. Yes, thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And it is the same answer, Madam Deputy Speaker. The ... all the units are looked at on a regular basis.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, yes, a supplementary.
Can the Minister please state what the schedule is, please, Madam Deputy Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It is the same schedule it was when they were in Government for five years.

It is on a regular basis. Of course, as you will know, I mean, I would think this is 101 stuff. But anyway, I will say it.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as any household in any country, you can have a regular maintenance schedule, but there will be things that happen at anyone's household at any given time that may cause you to move your schedule from one day to the next.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, the public knows the answer to the question.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Now I call on the Member from constituency 20. He has questions for the same Minister.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

So, the Minister's statements were quite interesting. Where he said it is absolute nonsense being spun in the media.

Hon. E. David Burt: Nonsense.

Hon. Michael Fahy: And he also said that contrarians write newspaper columns and try to cast doubt on the Government. So, I do have a couple of questions based on that for the Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh, so you are accepting the criticism?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

QUESTION 1: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: Question one: Is it the Minister's position, therefore, that building higher in Hamilton or giving a tourism incentive style Act of concessions to encourage private investors to develop property in Hamilton is absolute nonsense or contrarian? That is my first question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I do not know where the Honourable Member's been, but we have done that already.

An Hon. Member: So, it is not contrarian—

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, the Minister accepts that it is not contrarian. I mean, this is the point.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: And in fact, that is not accurate to say that there is a tourism and style investment Act in the City of Hamilton to encourage building higher. That is not accurate, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So, I have a second question. Okay?

The Deputy Speaker: You are going straight to a second question?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Straight to a second question.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

QUESTION 2: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: Given the statements, again about media people writing contrarian statements, and whatnot—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: —is it the Minister's position that it is absolute nonsense to suggest giving long-term leases to private developers on government land to incentivise building different forms of housing?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Madam Deputy Speaker, to ask that question, *Is it complete nonsense?* Absolutely not.

Hon. Michael Fahy: *Absolute nonsense* was the phrase.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Absolutely not.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.
Supplementary?

[[Inaudible interjections and laughter]]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Madam Deputy Speaker, then that means the Statement is inaccurate.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael Fahy: Okay? It is inaccurate. And this is a thing that is being put out to the public to suggest—

The Deputy Speaker: Do you want to put that in a question form?

Hon. Michael Fahy: Being contrarian. That is my point, that we have ideas. We have made many suggestions, and [the] Government has accepted.

My third question.

The Deputy Speaker: So, you are going straight to your third question?

QUESTION 3: GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Hon. Michael Fahy: My third question. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Let's go Michael Fahy. Let's go Honourable Member.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Is it the Minister's position that it is absolute nonsense to suggest repurposing empty school buildings for temporary and emergency housing?

An Hon. Member: Hmm.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Minister.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I would like to know what empty school buildings he refers to.

Hon. Michael Fahy: That is not an answer. It is a question to a question.

Again, is it absolute nonsense to make those types of suggestions to encourage that individuals that need emergency or temporary housing, other buildings that are in [the] government stock, such as schools, can be repurposed? I do not believe the people of Bermuda think it's nonsense and I do not believe that is contrarian.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I do believe that is nonsense.

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you for confirming that good suggestions to house people are absolute nonsense. I think the people of Bermuda heard that loud and clear.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, they are not good suggestions. That is the problem.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Third Minister, Minister Haywood.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Excuse me. Talk to the Chair.
Hello!

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: The Member from constituency 20. Do you have a question for the Minister of Economy and Labour?

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Put your question.

QUESTION 1: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you. This is for the Minister.
This is in relation to the report from the Registry General. Does the Minister believe it is concerning and that it is difficult to sustain a Bermudian population, given that there were 452 births recorded in 2025, while 558 persons passed away?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, the Government has been extremely clear about the demographic trends in Bermuda, and the Government has been deliberate as it pertains to the measures we have put in place to ensure that we have a sustainable economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary, Member?

Hon. Michael Fahy: No.
Second question, please.

The Deputy Speaker: Second question.

QUESTION 2: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Does the Minister believe that it is concerning that almost 25 per cent of live births in 2025 were from two non-Bermudian parents?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: I believe you would have to look at the historic trend. The question does not frame it in a matter as to whether that is normal or not. And if it is normal, then it would not be concerning.

The Deputy Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Michael Fahy: So, again, the question is a pretty serious one. And this is a third question.

The Deputy Speaker: Third question.

QUESTION 3: REGISTRY GENERAL ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Hon. Michael Fahy: Does the Minister think it is now time to introduce some form of incentives to encourage more Bermudian births, given the numbers that we have?

An Hon. Member: *Should the Minister—*

Hon. Michael Fahy: Should the Minister be putting in place incentives to ensure, or to encourage, Bermudians to have more children to get the numbers up?

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jason Hayward: The work that the Government does is to build an environment where Bermudians can thrive. Part of that is ensuring that Bermuda remains affordable. We have had a Minister appointed responsible for the cost of living. The Government has worked hard to reduce taxes. The Government has also provided additional social interventions, such as early childhood fees, supports for families, all to encourage more children being born in Bermuda.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: Would the Minister therefore accept that those plans that he has talked about [and] that are in place are not working given the downward trend of Bermudian births?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Jason Hayward: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Second supplementary?

Hon. Michael Fahy: No, again, the public's heard, I think, what is required.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
That takes us on to questions for Minister Furbert from the Member for constituency 7.
Member, put your question to the Minister.

**QUESTION 1: HEARING SUPPORT
PILOT PROGRAMME**

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

My question is, When will the pilot officially roll out and what is the current state of readiness?

The Deputy Speaker: For the pilot hearing programme?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, please. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you for that question.
I did mention in the Statement that the pilot [programme] rolled out [on] the 1st of May.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Supplementary or second question?

Ms. Robin Tucker: Yes, please, a supplementary.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Minister. I did miss that.
My supplementary is, Can the Minister tell us which area within her Ministry is actually primarily responsible for overseeing the pilot?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member, for that question.

I also mentioned in the [Statement] that the area that was responsible for this programme is Ageing and Disability Services.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Okay

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you very much. Obviously, if that is what was said, I missed that too.

But I was listening and I did go to elementary school.

[Laughter]

Ms. Robin Tucker: So, my second question is—

The Deputy Speaker: Second question?

**QUESTION 2: HEARING SUPPORT
PILOT PROGRAMME**

Ms. Robin Tucker: Can the Minister tell us where the public can access a list of service providers that are actually delivering the services that are part of the pilot?

So, I do remember that she said that applications will go to Ageing and Disability and applications for a different group will go to Age Concern, but there was not a whole lot talked about the actual providers.

So, if she could tell us how that actually works, or if there are specific service providers identified and how the public can access them.

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I did mention also in the [Statement] that anyone that is interested can contact Ageing and Disability Services, as well as Age Concern. And they should be able to get the names of the providers by contacting those two agencies.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Do you have a second, I mean, a supplementary?

Ms. Robin Tucker: I do not. My third question, Madam Deputy Speaker,—

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

**QUESTION 3: HEARING SUPPORT
PILOT PROGRAMME**

Ms. Robin Tucker: —is there was a lot that was mentioned, obviously, to do with seniors. But I did not hear anything about children.

So, I would like to know, are parents that are not on Financial Assistance, because I do . . . there was some mention in the Statement, but can the Minister sort of give some clarity around how parents with children that have hearing issues that are . . . whose parents may have private insurance, not on Financial Assistance or anything like that. But how is it open to parents generally that are not on Financial Assistance?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member, for the question.

There is a charity, which I believe one of your Members is involved in, and that would be the Committee of 25. That is a charity for children that have medical concerns, conditions. And they have been very helpful to parents with . . . if their child has had a medical condition that requires the use of hearing devices.

But again, I want the listening public to understand that hearing assessments, hearing aids are provided through private insurance if it is major medical. If there is a parent out there who has questions, I also

mentioned in my Statement that they can reach out to Ageing and Disability Services as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Are there any supplementaries for that?

Ms. Robin Tucker: No, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Before I call on the next Member, I just want to point out to the House that we have five minutes before lunch, yet we have 16 minutes [remaining in the Question Period], and I am going to ask you whether or not we want to burn out these 16 minutes or stop at 12:30.

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you. All right.
Okay. I call on the Member from constituency 10.
Minister, this Member has questions for you as well.

QUESTION 1: HEARING SUPPORT PILOT PROGRAMME

Mr. Robert King: I thank the Honourable Minister for the shout-out to the Committee of 25, of which I am a member. And we do work closely together in that regard.

Regarding the new pilot programme, can the Honourable Minister speak to what the budget allocation is and the number of staff that are going to be required to ensure that this new initiative operates efficiently to serve the needs of the community?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Madam Deputy Speaker, I thank the Member for the question.

The amount that we are starting with is approximately \$50,000 per year. And we are estimating that that will potentially help approximately 20 persons per year. We have done a bit of research as it relates to how much hearing aids and assessments do cost. Well, we have done the research, and these devices will also be available for persons in our community every five years.

Are there any other questions?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Do you have a supplementary?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Robert King: Yes, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Regarding the programme, what is the anticipated number of clients for the current year and the trend towards increased service need?

Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Member for the question.

I also just wanted to mention that I think the . . . Age Concern is the one that is following through with the administrative side of this programme. So, there is not any additional staff needed to perform or participate in this pilot programme.

What is great about this pilot programme is that we do have the opportunity to gather statistics and data, and it is part of the relationship that we will have with Age Concern that they will have to report yearly on how our community, our people are using this programme so that we can make better predictions about the finances that will surround the support for this programme.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

And on that note, I am going to stop us so the Premier can carry us for lunch unless you have a question that can be answered in less than a minute.

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. I ask that the Premier move us for lunch, please.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn for lunch until 2:00 p.m.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Are there any objections?
There are none.

[Laughter]

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: So moved.

Proceedings suspended at 12:29 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:01 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Good afternoon. We shall resume with today's proceedings.

[Gavel]

QUESTION PERIOD

[Continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: We are on Question Period. There are thirteen and a half minutes remaining and the last matter that we dealt with was with Minister Furbert, and I think Member King, constituency 10, was putting questions.

Member King, are you continuing?

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: Member King has said that he has finished with his questioning.

There were questions for disability and inclusion. Are Member Tucker and Member Pearman still wishing to ask those questions?

Mr. Scott Pearman: I'll defer, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

Ms. Robin Tucker: Madam Deputy Speaker, I will defer as well.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you very much.

That brings us to . . . No, there were none for the Ministry of National Security. That brings us to the [Statement] that was done regarding CARICOM.

Minister Lightbourne, I had one Member listed who wished to ask a question on that, that was Member Robinson.

Member, are you still wishing to ask your questions?

Okay, Minister Lightbourne, the questions are being put to you.

QUESTION 1: CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you and good afternoon to my colleagues and to you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

Can the Minister specify whether the 2024 Omnibus Survey's 53 per cent support for CARICOM was for CARICOM as an entity or for Bermuda to become a full member of CARICOM?

The Deputy Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I believe I have . . . oh, I do. Look at that. I have it here. This was support for Bermuda's full membership application. And so, this was the Omnibus Survey of December 2024, Q4. So, yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Do you have a supplement?

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

Given that there is a 53 per cent registered support, can we get a bit of breakdown on the pool that was utilised in this Omnibus Survey?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am happy to go back to confirm the further data points, but as would ordinarily be commissioned, the Omnibus Survey is conducted and does its own analysis in association for any of the data and invites an array of stakeholders in the community to provide questions should they wish to participate, of which we did in Q4 of 2024.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Do you have a supplement, a further supplemental? Sorry.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, [Madam] Deputy Speaker, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Given that we have moved away from the potential of a referendum, can the Minister confirm whether or not this Government, due to this support, will consider having a referendum anyway?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would definitely invite the quantifiable information that says that there is support for a referendum. I would say definitely there are members of the public who have engaged.

There are some that have asked for a referendum, but the Government has not, to date, seen the same be true for any of the other associations and organisations that the Government has been associated with and doesn't believe to be an appropriate use of taxpayer funds.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Second question?

QUESTION 2: CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, a second question.

The Minister did speak in the Statement about a referendum being unnecessary, and I understand

that we just got a previous answer, but I would like to get an outline as to why the Government has arrived to that decision that a referendum is unnecessary for full membership of CARICOM.

The Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The intention of the Ministry is to collate all of the feedback that we received during the consultative phase to include the array of invitations from the public and/or questions. In the White Paper, we will return to both here in the House and to the public with our summary of all of the CARICOM consultation to date and the various questions that may have been asked.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Is there a supplemental?

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: I recognise the Member from constituency 20.
Member, you have the floor. A supplemental.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Michael Fahy: Thank you.

Given the Minister's statement that she does not believe that a referendum would represent good value for money for the Bermudian taxpayer, is it the Minister's view that a fee of over \$2 million that would be likely payable to CARICOM for full membership does represent good value for money to the Bermudian taxpayer?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Member . . . Minister. Sorry.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the Honourable Member from constituency 20 for his question.

It is important to first anchor the response in the fact that the fee that Bermuda would be invited to pay has not yet been negotiated, and so what was included in the Green Paper was the maximum that it could be should we have signed up to every single Treaty of Chaguaramas as currently listed. We have already outlined, as coupled with the figure, time and time again, that that is not as an indicative cost, but not the cost that we anticipate because we already know, based on our letter of entrustment, that we cannot fully participate in all of the framework as an Overseas Territory, and so when invited to ask the value of being able to unlock opportunities for Bermudians that have ordinarily just been unlocked for the few, when being invited to unlock opportunities for the Government to pursue trade and diversification of routes for Bermuda,

when considering the diversification and expansion of education opportunities, again, that Bermuda has ordinarily not been able to participate in, the answer of if the Government would invest time and resource into that, I do believe it to be of value and good money for the resources and the opportunity that ordinarily has not been provided to Bermudians.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: Before I seek whether or not others wish to ask a supplemental, I would like to recognise that in the Gallery we have former Member, long-time Member, and former Leader of the OBA, Cole Simons. Welcome.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Okay.

[Question Period, continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: Do you have any further supplementals, Member from [constituency] 20?
Any further supplementals?
Yes.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Given that the Progressive Labour Party was unable to secure the popular vote, or 50 per cent support in the last general election, can the Minister confirm whether or not she feels that without that proper mandate, would a referendum therefore give the Government a true mandate to pursue full membership of CARICOM? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I appreciate the Honourable Member's creativity in the presentation of the question. We remain the Government. We have a mandate from the people. And based on that convincing mandate of

the number of seats that we have here in the House of Assembly, we will both anchor our actions—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —in our policies as instructed and informed by the members who have elected us. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: All right. Thank you.
Do I have a further supplemental?
I recognise the Member from constituency 2.
Member.

SUPPLEMENTARY

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

Would the Minister be so kind and share if indeed she feels Bermuda and Bermudians have paid a price for not being aligned with the Caribbean for centuries, akin to our alignment with the UK?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I thank the Member for the question, and I think that what is true about this process and through the consultation is that we have heard about the historical ties and the historical lack of acknowledgement that for years and for generations has been ignored relating to our Caribbean brothers and sisters, namely The Bahamas, namely Turks and Caicos and other islands that Bermudian names can be found [in] even to this day.

I think when we talk about economic opportunities and opportunities to take advantage of discussions and opportunities that are being discussed around the CARICOM table often, Bermuda is at the crossroads, and also stands at a place where it has evolved to be able to speak to both its successes and also take part in the successes of other Caribbean countries that are just like us and have similar challenges and similar opportunities to develop.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Are there any further supplementals?
I recognise the Member from constituency 7.
Member, you have the floor.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I just want to know if the Minister can just clarify why the decision was taken not to invite the public to weigh in, whether they actually wanted a referendum, why that wasn't done during the consultation process.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Ministry notes the history of associations that Bermuda has been a part of for years—

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —and a referendum is not part of its history. And so, we find it to be curious that only when invited to deepen ties with our clear history and clear trade and opportunities that ordinarily has been dissuaded from the population to both acknowledge and also participate in that the call for a referendum has been countered with it. Before the Government began its CARICOM journey, a 2024 Omnibus Survey was commissioned. Before the Ministry, under my stewardship, commissioned its journey, we did another Omnibus Survey at the Q4 of 2025.

And again, Bermudians, without knowing, seeing, and hearing, they were willing to participate and saw benefits and were able to quantify those to the Ministry. And so I feel it is clearly an attempt and a consistent attempt to create what is the distraction of the opportunity that the Bermudian public saw fit to weigh into and saw it beneficial for them and us as their agents and acting on their behalf to both problem-solve for the country and problem-solve for their challenges.

We see it fit to proceed to this exploration and to deepen in ties to an organisation that we've already been a part of for years, and since 2003, in particular.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Member, are there any other supplementals?

[No audible response]

The Deputy Speaker: There being none, Member, do you have a third question?

QUESTION 3: CARICOM, THE STORY OF US: PUBLIC CONSULTATION UPDATE

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

And my third question is, if businesses are already expanding into the Caribbean market as an associate with associate membership, can the Minister outline what further barriers will be broken down for businesses with full membership of CARICOM?

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: This is a question that's already in the public domain as part of the Green Paper and—

An Hon. Member: Read it.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —successive Ministerial Statements. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Do you have a supplemental?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Supplemental, yes.

[Crosstalk]

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: So, my supplemental is, What exactly are the barriers now that exist for businesses to operate and expand that are based in Bermuda to the Caribbean nation as an associate member of CARICOM?

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I actually included in my Ministerial Statement the fact that a select few of businesses that we know of, I mean, just . . . you look in the newspaper yesterday *[sic]* and you can see the record—

An Hon. Member: Today.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: —or today. (Thank you, Honourable Member.) The record number of earnings for those very select few that have seen it to be beneficial, have engaged with the Ministry and confirmed it to be beneficial, but unfortunately do not want to see the opportunity for a small Bermudian owner and business owner to be able to, through support from their Government, be able to have access to these opportunities.

So, the question becomes, can the businesses that have already been beneficial in the Caribbean continue to prosper? Yes. But we are trying to unlock that for the Bermudians who have not ordinarily been given that opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.
Second supplemental?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes. Supplemental.

Can the Minister outline what are the supports that will be given to these small business owners and entrepreneurs through full membership of CARICOM? And this was not in the Green Paper. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: The Green Paper does outline the various initiatives relating to economic support and trade diversification for small business owners.

Specifically, it talks about the collaboration that takes place around the table to foster and encourage the up-tick and advancement of small to medium-sized businesses to advance their presence in the Caribbean and their Caribbean footprint.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Supplementary?

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I didn't even get the question out.

Minister and Member from constituency 29, you have a supplemental?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Yes, I do.

Minister, do you think that Butterfield Bank have the same negative concerns as the OBA with regard to CARICOM?

[Laughter]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Imputing improper motive]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: The Minister is imputing improper motive.

We do not . . . it's not a negative concern.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: It's not negative. So, you can't frame it that way. He should retract that. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. All right.

Any further supplementals?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25.
Member, you have the floor.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Yes, the Minister referred to collaboration and roundtables and stuff, but what specific initiatives will be available in a tangible form to small businesses for other specific funding, specific trade agreements, et cetera? Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: I would have to refer the Honourable Member to the Green Paper because it is included, including the funds.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER
[Misleading]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I'm sure the Minister is inadvertently misleading the House because I've carefully reviewed that paper and it has not outlined any specific tangible benefits that are available to small businesses in Bermuda, and I would happily retract that if she could provide that information on the floor of the House. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.
Oh . . . Just as I call the Minister.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Pages 32 and 33. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: That ends Question Period.
Okay, so Members, moving on.

**CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY
SPEECHES**

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 23, I think it is. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, and good afternoon, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I bring condolences for the family of Claire [Howard], who is currently [receiving] a funeral today. She was lost tragically on Bermuda's roads and was a family friend and a member of the Equestrian [Federation] in Bermuda. I wish her family and friends, or pray for her family and friends, as they memorialise her today. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 28, Member and Junior Minister. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

First, I'd like to give condolences to the family of one of my constituents, Ms. Inez Louise Lovell of 10 Cedar and Spice Lane. I associate Minister Weeks.

Also, I would like to give condolences to the family of Mr. Stanley Wade from Somerset—

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Associate me.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I associate MP Swan—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: —and MP Dill.

If you are a person of Somerset, you know Stanley [was] always up and down the community, So, it again will be . . . it was a shock to hear of his passing. And it will be again a loss of him in our Somerset community.

And then also to Ms. Annette Dickinson, also of Somerset. While I didn't know her personally, I knew her children. And when I found out that she had passed and found that those were her children, I was again shocked and surprised. So, I'd like to send condolences to the family of Ms. Annette Dickinson.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I associate MP Dill.

On a lighter note, Madam Deputy Speaker, last week we had our Bermuda Day holiday. And I would like to send congratulations to all the participants in the bike race. I associate the Minister for Sport. I will associate the whole House.

All the participants in the Sinclair Packwood [Memorial] Race, the [Heritage Day] Junior Classic race, and the full Bermuda Day [Half-]Marathon—to all the participants, congratulations. And then to the winners, again, huge congratulations for the effort, for the result of the effort that you put in.

Short story, Madam Deputy Speaker, I at one point chose to many years ago, about 20 years ago, decided I was going to run 24th of May. I was going to do it unofficially, so I woke up that morning, put on my running shoes, ran down the bottom of my hill and said, *That's enough*. Turned around and went right back home.

[Laughter]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: So, I give credit to those who run that 12, or 11.5, mile race, because I only made it about 200 metres.

But the last, [Madam Deputy] Speaker, I'd like to send congratulations, I associate the whole House, to Ms. Kenni Thompson, who recently announced her retirement from football. At the young age of 25, so it is a—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dennis Lister III: I understand that here. But it is a shock at that young age, but when you read her reasons, I understand. Even myself as a sportsman, sometimes we have to do things that others might not think is the best, but we have to do it for ourself. But I will just say that she has made herself available to represent the women's national team next week in those two home games. So, we wish her a final farewell, and hopefully the Bermuda women's team can win both those games as a farewell for her and her retirement. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the member from constituency 12. Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you. Thank you, thank you, [Madam Deputy] Speaker. I was almost going to point-of-order to the Honourable Dennis Lister. He forgot to congratulate his wife. They just had a baby!

[Desk thumping and cheering]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Anytime we can have someone adding to the gene pool of Bermuda, we want to say thank you.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We need more babies. And I also did call the Speaker as well. He was on his way to the hospital to see, of course, his new grandchild. It is his first grandchild. And I believe we were talking earlier and you said it is the first on your wife's side as well, grandchild.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Yes.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: So, I just want to congratulate the Honourable Member for making it happen. I . . . I . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: I . . . I—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Oh! I don't know the baby's name.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Forth! Oh, my goodness, there you go. Excellent!

And I would encourage him to have plenty more, as you know, we need more babies in Bermuda. Thank you, [Madam Deputy] Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 14 *[sic]*, I believe it is.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Wow! Constituency 15, Pembroke East.

The Deputy Speaker: [Constituency] 15. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Madam, yes, roughing me right up. Madam Deputy Speaker, thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: Constituency 14 is Minister Lightbourne. Sorry, I do apologise.

Hon. Owen Darrell: Good morning, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I'm going to start on a sombre note and then work my way up to congratulations. So, I rise this morning to send condolences, unfortunate condolences, to the family of a young man who unfortunately lost his life on the roads in a very tragic circumstance. I'd like to associate the Minister of National Security with this. Mr. Laquan Thomas, Madam Deputy Speaker. Mr. Thomas was a constituent of mine, and his mom, as well as a few of his siblings, in the Mission Lane area. Laquan was a young man full of life and was working in the hospitality industry at the time of his unfortunate passing. I did have the opportunity to go and meet with his mother, Ms. Chantelle Thomas. Like I said, a few of his siblings, as well as his father, Mr. Matthew White, which some of you may know as "Chewy." So, I'd like to start and send condolences there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

And on a rising up to a more positive note, I'd like to send congratulations to one of my constituents. Many of her know her as an umpire. She's also a young lawyer in our community, Ms. Precious Smith.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Owen Darrell: And I'd like to associate Members of the House to that. Ms. Precious Smith has been appointed as one of the first female umpires to a prestigious umpires panel. And I want to wish her well. You

would recall that Ms. Precious Smith was the umpire last year at the Eastern Counties Cricket series. And you know who the champions end up being there, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Owen Darrell: Yes, the Cleveland County Cricket Club.

So, I want to continue to highlight her and her efforts. Those of you who are into the sport of cricket will see Precious Smith every weekend umpiring in the middle of our cricket games. And we hope that one day she will become the first female umpire, I believe, of our Cup Match Classic. So, I would like to congratulate her.

Also, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do . . . I did say I wanted to be associated, but I did want to get on my feet and put it on the record of Ms. Kenni Thompson. As she did say in her article, she spent a lot of her years outside of Bermuda. So, it's good to hear that, you know, she is going to follow her passions, whatever they may be. And we do have the opportunity to see her play one more time, at the very least, next week, Thursday and Sunday at the National Stadium when the women's team takes on Belize. So, congratulations to her to a very successful career.

[Timer chimes]

Hon. Owen Darrell: And I'll speak more about the success of Bermuda Day at another time. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25. Member, you have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I bring good tidings today. First of all, there were 230 adult learners who received various certificates and acknowledgements of their progress at the Bermuda College. And as someone myself who's probably spent too much time in the educational system, I want to congratulate all of them.

[Inaudible interjection]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And certainly, elementary school and others.

I want to congratulate and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

I want to send a belated happy birthday to Ursula Tyrrell, who turned 95 earlier this week.

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I associate Member Tucker, Member Tyrrell—

An Hon. Member: Associate the whole House.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I associate the whole House, Madam Deputy Speaker

I want to congratulate my constituent, Jessica Lewis. Some of you may know of her athletic endeavours. She's got a personal best and a gold medal at the World Para Athletics Grand Prix in the 100 metres, only two one-hundredths [0.02] short of the world record.

An Hon. Member: Wow!

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So, I think that's pretty—

[Inaudible interjections]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: We associate the whole House.

And finally, I would like to congratulate Warwick Workmen's [Club] for the victory in the T20 Cricket First Division. So, a lot of things to celebrate today. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 4. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I do want to take the opportunity to send my condolences to the family of Ms. Janice Wright. Her children, Dervin, Derek, and Lisa. Ms. Wright was a prominent—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I associate the whole House, the Premier, the whole House in regard to Ms. Janice Wright. Ms. Wright hailed from Chapel of Ease Lane, and she will be sorely missed. Particularly, I always ran into Ms. Wright at our social senior event. She's a social butterfly . . . she was a social butterfly, also immaculate with her dress. She was a seamstress as well. And so big condolences to the family who will, I'm sure, miss the presence of Ms. Wright.

I also want to send condolences to the family of Ms. Leila Chavis, Ms. Chavis did reside at Summerhaven [Residential Home]. However, she is a St. Georgian.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Also [I am] associating Member Robin Tucker, constituency . . .

An Hon. Member: Seven.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: —[constituency] 7.

I'm sending condolences to her family, her children, Maurice, Marlon, and Michelle . . . Mrs. Chavis passed suddenly, and again will be sorely missed by the family of Summerhaven, as well as all of those who loved and cared for her. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: Oh, sorry.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I do want to acknowledge. I do want to acknowledge.

The Deputy Speaker: You have time. You have time.

Hon. Tinee Furbert: I do want to acknowledge all of the students who participated in the "Spring into the Arts."

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. Tinee Furbert: All of the educators, visual art, performing arts persons, creative art spaces, who come to the stage and there is representation from the East [Family of Schools] the West [Family of Schools, and the Central Zone [Family of] Schools. And the children . . . I don't know if you had the opportunity to go in and watch the performances. They definitely were amazing. I know what it's like to get on a stage, and [there] can be stage fright, but our students are amazing. And every year we get to see their amazing talent. So, I want to say a big shout out to all of the students, all of the educators, [and] teachers, who helped bring "Spring into the Arts" back to us every year.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other persons . . . who wish to speak? I recognise the Minister from constituency 16.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. And good afternoon to you.

I would like to start off my remarks by . . . wanting to be associated with the remarks on Ms. Inez Louise Lovell. I didn't know her personally, but she is actually the mother of the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Dana Lovell. So, on behalf of my Ministry and the Bermuda Fire [& Rescue] Service, our hearts and condolences go out to him and his family at this time.

On a more upbeat note, Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to congratulate Wilmut Trucking Service. And I raise them—

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I raise it because anytime one of us as an MP needs any assistance, he and his team are Johnny-on-the-spot. And they come on time, they do what they got to do, and they go over and beyond. So, I just want to take this time to tell him publicly *thank you* for him and his team supporting [constituency] 16 on our last senior's tea. Hats off. And I'll see you next year, good brother, you and your team.

The Deputy Speaker: You hope.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: And before I take my seat, I want to also be associated with the remarks for Ms. Precious Smith, one of my cousins. And I've seen her come from being a football star to going to university, graduating top of her class. And she's come back now, she's umpiring, and knowing her personality, you know, she's not going to quit until she goes to the top of her craft. So, hats off to her.

So that's it for me today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister

Are there any other Members?

Oh, I recognise the Member from constituency 33. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise to join in the condolences for Brother Stanley Wade from the Sandys community and from my family, the Wade family, my cousins. Those who knew Stanley knew him for two things, many things, but two things in particular, if you didn't know him that well. His camera: taking pictures at all the different PLP events. And the brother loved to talk, loved to talk. Oh, my goodness.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: And you know, when you have somebody around who loves to talk, during the last election, the last election, he was at the Sandys PLP headquarters in crunch time. And I said, *Look, my team, my chairman, who runs the Sandys campaign, instructed you to go talk somewhere else because you will distract us from the business at hand*. But he was a staunch follower and supported the PLP. And we will miss . . . and we will miss the chance to talk to him and hear his voice again. And from my family to my cousins and to the rest of the community, I give my deepest condolences.

While on my feet, I'd also like to extend my condolences to [the family of] Brother Edward Eve, a constituent of mine with a long family connection through his sister, my Aunt Gloria. And, you know, he was a character. That's how . . . I'll just leave it at that. But I join with his family in mourning his loss.

On a positive note, I'd like to extend congratulations to my former classmate, Esan Frederick, who's been appointed as the new resort manager at Rosewood. And I am continuing to be proud of this young man. All Members, I'm sure, would like to be associated congratulating this. Bermudians in the tourism industry succeeding and heading towards leadership position is important. And I think that he has been an example in the industry for many years. And I think that he will continue to do well and continue to impress.

While on my feet, I also would like to extend condolences . . . sorry, no, congratulations to a former Member of this Chamber and a former Premier, the Honourable Dr. Ewart F. Brown, who celebrated his birthday earlier this month. And I wish him continued years of health, happiness, joy, and all the rest.

While on my feet, I'd also like to extend congratulations and join on to the remarks made by the Honourable Member Dennis Lister [III] about the participants in the Bermuda Day and to the organisers and everyone involved. I think this year, and you could probably tell by the lack of negative posts on Facebook, I think this year was probably the best. And I commend them for the work they have done and everybody who participated to make it happen.

And before I end, I would like to extend a happy birthday greeting, a happy belated birthday greeting to another former Member of this House, the former MP for Sandys North, the Honourable Lionel Simmons, my father. Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 26, the Government Whip. You have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Good afternoon, [Madam Deputy] Speaker. Thank you and afternoon to colleagues.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm going to continue on with my line of congratulating our youth in Bermuda who are doing good things. And I know I sort of ran out of time the last time I was here, but I will continue with this one. Anais Godfrey, I want to send congratulations to him. He's the son of Alaire and Andrew Godfrey. He actually graduated with a BA in music technology. Now, he's so multi-talented that he's now going to go on to flight school to be a commercial pilot. So, I certainly wish him all the best and congratulations.

Secondly, I would like to send congratulations to the daughter of Craig and Simonnette Tyrrell. Now, let me declare my interest because she is actually the lovely granddaughter of both Sheila and Neville Tyrrell.

She graduated . . . Camryn graduated from Barry University with a BA in Arts and Television and Digital Media, summa cum laude. So, I certainly want to wish her all the best and I associate her cousin, Minister Weeks, as well . . . and the Honourable [Member] Robin Tucker.

And finally, I certainly would not be able to leave the House today if I don't say this one. I want to wish the very best to my mother-in-law, Valeria Butterfield, who turns 97 on Saturday. And I do wish her all the best.

And again, I'm going to associate her nephew, Minister Weeks, who probably forgot. And so, I hope he doesn't forget on the weekend and go by and say happy birthday to her. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 2. Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, I'd like to be associated with the congratulations going to Ms. Butterfield. And I'll save that story for Minister Weeks to tell another time.

But I would like condolences to be sent to the Leader family, Mr. Earl Leader, if it hasn't already been done. I associate the Honourable Member Neville Tyrrell, his regular golfing buddy, on a Monday. And may he rest in peace. And for all his contributions in sport and in music.

I had the honour to attend an event celebrating the life of Ruth Thomas. And that story is one everybody needs to be told time and time again, how this lady is the lady of culture in our society. But her story is one of amazing, amazing grace. And I give thanks for being in her presence, and for her still being here to share her stories with us.

I'd like to be associated with the congratulations going to Mr. Esan Frederick, for his ascension in the hospitality industry. And the Minister responsible for Tourism would like to be associated as well.

And I'm sure the Minister will associate himself with the congratulations to Ms. [Carlita] Lodge, the Director of Culture for a successful Bermuda Day, on which she presided over as director for the very first time. But as one who participated in the parade, seeing it from that angle, it was very well attended. And especially, I say this, I gave congratulations last week to the contribution to culture made by the Freemasons in the Peppercorn Ceremony, how tradition has evolved and become more colourful, breaking old barriers and embracing. I've seen that in the Gombey's, where you have these troupes with all these different vibrant colours and special pride in being different, a little bit different from the next. I think it's just a great example of the growth of our mosaic of Bermuda. And I just want to celebrate that as well.

And also, Mr. Tyler Smith, I think as a professional athlete, just showed you his quality as a professional athlete. He took it to them on a tough, hot, humid day. And he did absolutely well.

And my cousin, Kenni Thompson, not too dissimilar for many great female athletes have retired young. Lorena Ochoa, the world number one golfer taught by my good friend, who I grew up playing golf with in Europe, retired at 28 as world number one. So, it's not uncommon for women to have to retire where men go on and do it much longer.

[Timer chimes]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker.

I just wanted to associate myself with the condolences of Mrs. Wright. Though I was not privileged enough to meet her, her son, Dervin, and his wife, Belinda, are constituents of mine. And Belinda being my former boss, I had a lot of time to speak with Dervin and her and to form a great relationship with them. And so, I really am—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes. I associate Member . . . well, I'll associate the whole House again. But I think Minister Tinee—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes, she associated all of us the first time.

But it would be remiss of me not to rise on my feet to give condolences to one of my constituents who has always had a warm word and a listening ear for me. And so, I just want to send this to the family. And obviously, [there are] not many words you can say for loss of a parent. But, you know, I just wish them strength and endurance during this tough time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 14, and Minister. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I rise initially on a sombre note to offer a tribute and condolences to the family of Mr. Raymond Beach, specifically Karen Beach, who is my constituent from constituency 14. [I am] also associating my colleagues Minister De Silva, Minister Weeks . . . and Minister Rabain as well. Recognising both his impact for the community, the sudden death, having died in his 64th year. But I do want to offer tribute to his children, Reba, Raymond and Jahmori, also on that loss.

Additionally, I wanted to stand and belatedly offer congratulations to Ms. Tawana Lee, who participated in the Bermuda Day Parade (also a constituent of mine) as a Grand Marshal, who not only was recognised for her role in PHC [Majorettes & Drum Corps] and keeping it alive at a time when majorettes were dying out. It was often a struggle to have them as part of the parade. And I think this year's parade is not only a testament to the effort and investment that the Government has done, but I'm thankful that Tawana had an opportunity to be celebrated for her role, even in a small part, having been a part of the parade as a Grand Marshal and then going back and also then participating in the same parade as a majorette. And so, I do want to celebrate her today.

Additionally, I want to offer congratulations on the 81st anniversary of Devonshire Recreation [Club]. Members of the public should also know that this evening they are having their second annual fair, from 5:00 to 10:00 on the field. And I do encourage members of the public to support them, noting how integral they are to our community and also the consistent efforts that they are making to ensure that the community is engaged. And so, I do want to both celebrate them on their anniversary and on their work in the community.

And finally, I wish to offer recognition for Ms. Kazrah Bashir-Baker, and I hope I announce her name correctly. She was here today, Madam Deputy Speaker, in the Gallery. She is an M2 Sandys student who is here on her day release and work shadow to have a feel and flavour of what it is like in Parliament. And so, I want to both acknowledge her and I do invite other Members of this House to also acknowledge her in the usual way.

[Desk thumping]

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

And welcome, Ms. Bashir-Baker. Welcome, Ms. Bashir-Baker.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

There . . . Yes, I recognise the Premier and Member from constituency 18. You have the floor.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, though the Honourable Minister from constituency 4 and the Honourable Member for constituency 30, associated the entire House with these remarks, I do wish to just rise to put on the record the condolences being expressed to the family of the late Ms. Janice Cynthia Wright. Without question, as Minister Tinee had said, you could find her at all senior's events and she was even supposed to be in the parade on Bermuda Day as representing your side of the Island, the East End of the Island. And unfortunately passed away.

The thing is, Madam Deputy Speaker, it was only two weeks prior to her passing that I had seen her at her brother-in-law's funeral, who was a constituent of mine, Mr. Rudolph Lawrence, who we had mentioned a couple of weeks ago. And so, I was there at the event [and] saw her. My mom used to do her hair. She said, *How's your mom doing?* I took a picture, all the rest, which I typically do, sent and share with her.

She was such a wonderful lady, bright, smiling all the time, completely energetic and certainly demonstrating that, you know, you are only as old as you feel because even up to her 88th year, she was sprightly, always going around, always immaculately put together and everything else. So, I just wanted to make sure that I could record my condolences on the record.

There is another condolence I wish to record, but I'm going to wait until that is announced publicly and we will do it the next time we are sitting. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Thank you.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 36. Member, you have the floor.

Rev. Dr. Emilygail A. Dill: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I'd like to stand today to, first of all, offer condolences to the family of Seth Gene Taylor. He is the son of David Taylor and Lorna Jean. And I just want to express what a fine young gentleman he was and certainly to express to the family my sincere sadness at hearing of his passing and certainly the legacy that he leaves behind even in his short lifetime will be one that will be continued for many years.

I'd also like to take the opportunity, Madam Deputy Speaker, to congratulate the Community Restoration Group who a few weeks ago completed a project that brought together countless individuals within the Sandys' community, and in constituency 36, in particular, in the revitalisation, the cleanup and revitalisation of the Mangrove Bay area and the introduction of "Mangrove Nights" in that area.

Our community was immensely elated by this initiative because Mangrove Bay has long been a place where families could come and go and swim and what-not and gather. And in recent years it had gotten into a pretty neglected state. And along with the Department

of Works and Engineering and other individuals, in particular Mr. Bromby, we were able to see that area cleaned up and revitalised, and in particular the introduction of the Mangrove Nights. Because one of the pain points in our constituency has been the Somerset Village and several of the store owners had expressed how really disappointing it is that each day they have to see so many buses going through, you know, going past their stores and never stopping.

So, this was actually a way that we could see people would stop, people would be there and begin to see the Somerset Village revitalised. So, we want to thank the Community Restoration Group and all those who were a part of that initiative and we wish it much success as it goes forward. Thank you so much.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 13. Member, you have the floor. Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you Madam Speaker . . . Madam Deputy Speaker.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I'd like to send congratulations to the Loyal Hill community on the holding of their annual Bermuda Day celebration that takes place the Sunday before Bermuda Day. It's an event that started during the COVID-19 time when Bermuda Day wasn't held. And they have come together and it's grown every single year. [And a] special congratulations to the annual go-kart race, although this year there was only one go-kart that made it to the bottom of the hill but it has been renamed upon the passing of Marvin "Duke" Woolridge who was a fantastic participant in this and always built the best go-karts and always prided himself in racing up and down that hill.

But Madam Deputy Speaker, anyone who did attend the event was sure to be treated to a prelude of what was to come for Bermuda Day with the majorettes and with the various bands and various people showing up as well as the crowning of Mr. and Mrs. Loyal Hill. And this year, something a little special, they had like Junior Miss Loyal Hill and Junior Mr. Loyal Hill. So, definitely just congratulations to the organisers who continue to exceed the expectations of that close-knit community as they put together these various events throughout the year.

But certainly, the Bermuda Day event is turning out to be one of the events that is a must-see for anyone who really loves the culture of Bermuda and what it is that we celebrate to being Bermudian.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

There being none, I just want to associate myself with the remarks regarding "Spring into the Arts," a

spectacular event and a spectacular showcase of talent with our young people from the Eastern School Zone. And they certainly acquitted themselves extremely well. And it gives much hope for the future in terms of the type of individuals we can look forward to becoming leaders in some shape or form one day.

I would like to be associated with the remarks regarding Mrs. Wright, and . . . who was a former constituent of mine before the boundary changes. And her son, Derek, in particular, I consider him a friend. And she will be a great loss in their family.

And I would like to [express] condolences for the family of Miss Lena [Wade-]Smith, who is or was a constituent of mine. [I] express condolences to her husband, David. Some of you may not know, she was the grandmother of the woman who clearly made history when she had quintuplets. And so even though only four remained of those babies, Robin Smith's mother, Lena Smith, did pass away. I was just trying to give some context if people didn't know who she was. She was the grandmother of those four, those five quintuplets.

So, with that said, we shall now move on to the next item on the agenda.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Deputy Speaker: There have been none brought to our attention.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Deputy Speaker: There have been none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: And that will move us to, I think, number one. I think the first one has been removed. The pension . . .

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: It's not?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay.
Premier.

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

The Deputy Speaker: You have the floor.

BILLS

FIRST READINGS

PENSIONS (INCREASE) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

PAYROLL TAX AMENDMENT (NO. 2) ACT 2026

RETAIL SHOPS (TEMPORARY CUSTOMS DUTY RELIEF FOR CAPITAL INVESTMENTS) AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bills for their first readings so they may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Pensions (Increase) Amendment Act 2026, the Payroll Tax Amendment (No. 2) Act 2026, and the Retail Shops (Temporary Customs Duty Relief for Capital Investments) Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you for those Bills, Premier.

That takes us to the next one, which comes under the Minister of Economy and Labour.
Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

BERMUDA IMMIGRATION AND PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Jason Hayward: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: The Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

And that brings us to the final Bill to be tabled. And that comes under the Minister of Home Affairs.
Minister.

BILL

FIRST READING

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. Alexa Lightbourne: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that

it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Electricity Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There is one.

And that comes under the Member from constituency 23.

Member Richardson.

STANDING ORDER 28(1)

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Madam Deputy Speaker, per the provisions of Standing Order 28(1), I [seek] leave to introduce and read a Bill for the first time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead.

OPPOSITION BILL

FIRST READING

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS AND PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Madam Deputy Speaker, I'm introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs and Parliamentary Election Amendment Act 2026.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.
That moves us on.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Deputy Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Deputy Speaker: I call on Minister Adams.
Minister.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

COMPASS POINT BUILDING APPROVAL TO PURCHASE

Hon. Jache Adams: Madam Deputy Speaker, this serves a formal notice that I intend to move the following motion at the next available opportunity.

"BE IT RESOLVED THAT, in accordance with section 2(1)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1970, this

Honourable House approve the purchase of the Compass Point Building together with all land appurtenant thereto, situate at 9 Bermudiana Road, Pembroke."

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Deputy Speaker: I understand that there are two items for consideration.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: And there are still two.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Yes. Okay. All right.
Minister.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Okay.

[Crosstalk]

The Deputy Speaker: You need to . . . Okay. Okay.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the second time.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be read for a second time.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

BILL

SECOND READING

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, on the 12th of September 2025, the Public Service Superannuation (PSSF Stabilisation) Amendment Act 2025 was

approved in this Honourable House. That Act came into operation on the 1st of October 2025. And that Act fulfilled a long-term commitment of the Government to bring forward reforms to ensure the sustainability of the Public Service Superannuation Fund. The reforms would be phased in and reflect several policy and legislative changes to the Act.

Madam Deputy Speaker, to ensure that Act properly reflects the policy intent of the 2025 PSSF reforms, and preserves those provisions of the Public Service Superannuation Act 1981 (being the principal Act), [which] were not intended to be changed by the approved reforms, I bring to this Honourable House additional proposed amendments to the Public Service Superannuation (PSSF Stabilisation) Amendment Act 2025. The proposed amendments are intended to align the legislation with the approved policy intent, improve clarity, and remove inconsistencies within the principal Act.

So, this is, of course, just a technical house-keeping Act, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is no change whatsoever insofar as the policy and the matters that were agreed with the unions prior to us advancing these PSSF reforms that we advanced in 2025.

Madam Deputy Speaker, following further analysis of the Act and with the advice of our legal and technical and actuarial teams, a recommendation was to amend the Act to address the following areas:

Contributions to be deducted from salary. This amendment preserves the original policy intent that a person should only join the Fund where there is sufficient time before a compulsory retirement to accrue meaningful pension benefits.

Circumstances entitling contributors to payments. This amendment is intended to preserve the approved retirement framework for both special group and non-special group contributors while clarifying when reduced and unreduced pensions may be taken.

Reduced pension payments upon early retirement. This amendment is intended to maintain internal consistency with the Act.

Age of compulsory retirement and deferred pensions. This amendment is intended to ensure the compulsory retirement provisions and deferred pensions remain consistent with the revised retirement and pension provisions of the revised Act.

And then, service qualifying for pension. This amendment is intended to preserve the added service benefit of up to five additional years of service for lower ranking officers in the special group, notwithstanding the phased increase in retirement age.

Madam Deputy Speaker, as I indicated in my budget speech delivered to the Honourable House on the 20th of February 2026, this Government has delivered on its promise to reform the PSSF and began the road to stabilising the Fund and put the pension plan on a stronger footing for the longer term.

And it's important to note, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the reason why it is important that we did that, not just for matters related to retirees who will have their pension, but it's also to deal . . . or future retirees, so their pension will be there. But it also created the room for us to increase retirees' pensions as well, noting that those pension increases have been frozen since 2014. And earlier today, I did table a Bill to increase public sector retirees' pensions by 10 per cent.

There have been a lot of questions that have come from this. A lot of questions from Honourable Members. And so, I just want to take some time, although it's not specifically with this Bill, just to clarify this matter, which the Bill—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Anticipation]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The Premier is anticipating debate.

Hon. E. David Burt: I'm not anticipating debate.

[Inaudible]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

I am not anticipating debate.

I think what is important to note is that this is talking about what happened on this, Honourable Member. But, Madam Deputy Speaker, you've already ruled. So let me go forward.

Madam Deputy Speaker, it is important to note that the public sector retirees will get an increase of 10 per cent on their pensions. That increase is effective April 1. However, as we are just tabling the Bill and the matters will go through, and because we have to deal with all the other increases in public sector pay, that those matters will be paid in October, but they will be backdated to April.

So, I think it's just important at this point in time to note while we are discussing matters related to the public sector pension funds that the changes that we made allowed us the space to be able to increase public sector pensions for retirees without compromising the long-term effects of the Fund. And that's why it's important for these changes to come into place, because it has allowed us, as stated in the Budget Statement, to be able to increase public sector retiree pensions by 10 per cent.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, as I close, Madam Deputy Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections]

POINT OF ORDER

[Anticipation]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: the Premier continues to anticipate debate on items on the Order Paper for [the] next session.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

I'm not sure whether or not he is actually anticipating a debate as opposed to just mentioning. Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Can I proceed?

[No audible response]

Hon. E. David Burt: It's like the Member almost wants to be renamed to "Mr. Point of Order." It's all the time.

But anyhow, as I close, Madam Deputy Speaker, these proposed amendments will ensure we get it right for both current and future public officers' retirement plans. As it has been, this Government has pressed forward on these changes. Challenges notwithstanding have brought stability to our Public Sector Pension Fund. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you do have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Madam Acting President *[sic]*. Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: I got you.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker.
This is my old seat.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, and just for the knowledge of the House, because his microphone is not working, I've allowed him to sit there so that he can speak without having to lean in front of the Member who actually does sit there.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: And I'm grateful for your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Of course. Go right ahead.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Clearly, the One Bermuda Alliance, when these reforms were originally presented, certainly supported them. As you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, it has been very important to us for a long time, and we had called for a very, very long time, that these reforms be made.

And as such, we certainly do support the technical amendments in this Bill to ensure that everything is carried out properly and all the i's are dotted and the t's are crossed. And therefore, we have no concerns with this Bill. Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to this Amendment Act?

There being none, I call on the respective Minister and Premier.

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

I move the Bill be now committed.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Bill be committed.

Are there any objections?

There are none.

So, I call on Member Smith to come and take the seat.

[Pause]

House in Committee at 3:04 pm

[Ms. Linda Smith, Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in Committee of the Whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled the [Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026](#).

I call on the Minister in charge to proceed. Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Madam Chairman, I move . . . I would like to move all the clauses.

The Chairman: The Minister has made a motion that all the clauses be moved.

Are there any objections?

If there are no objections, please proceed.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Clause 1 is self-explanatory.

Clause 2, just for ease of reference, I'm reading the explanatory memorandum, so we can all follow along.

Clause 2 repeals and replaces subsections (3) and (3A) of section 12 ("Contributions to be deducted from salary") as follows—

Subsection (3) applies to teachers whose first employment with the Government commences upon having attained the age of 60 years (or 61 or 62 years, as the case may be). In order for such persons to elect to contribute to the Fund and receive any benefit from the Fund the period between their first employment and the age of compulsory retirement must be at least eight years.

Subsection (3A) applies to all other persons employed by the Government (except police officers, fire officers, prison officers, and members of staff of the Bermuda Regiment) whose first employment with the Government commences upon having attained the age of 60 years (or 61 or 62 years, as the case may be). Similar to subsection (3), in order for such persons to elect to contribute to the Fund and to receive any benefit from the Fund the period between their first employment and the age of compulsory retirement must be at least eight years.

Clause 3 amends subsection (1)(a) and (b) and the proviso to section 19 ("Circumstances entitling contributor to payment") by retaining the age of retirement at the age first stated in section 19(1)(a) and (b) of the principal Act. With respect to police officers below the rank of superintendent, and fire officers below the rank of divisional officers, such officers maintain the ability to retire at the earlier of the age they complete 25 years of service and the mandatory retirement age. With respect to prison officers below the rank of deputy commissioner, such officers maintain the ability to retire at the earlier of the age they complete 21 years of service and the mandatory retirement age. The proviso is amended to allow those officers who retire based on completing 25 years of service or 21 years of service [or on completing 21 years of service] in subparagraphs (b) to (f) of paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) to elect to receive reduced pension payments beginning at the age of 50 years.

Clause 3 also repeals and replaces [sub]section (1)(d) of section 19 by reverting to the former wording to allow contributors to whom that paragraph applies to retire at the age of 60 years.

Clause 4 amends section 19A ("Reduced pension payments upon early retirement") as a result of the numbering amendments made in this Bill to paragraph (iv) of the proviso to section 19(1) of the principal Act.

Clause 5 amends subsections (1), (2) and (4) of section 22 ("Age of compulsory retirement"). As a result of the amendments made to section 19(1)(a) and (b), the words "first occurring" in subsection (1) of section 22 are no longer required. The amendment to subsection (2) extends the period of compulsory retirement

(in respect of current contributors to whom that provision applies) to the year 2033. Subsection (4) is amended to provide for a pension not to be deferred if a contributor is required to retire by the Governor under section 22.

Clause 6 amends section 24A ("Special provision for certain contributors") as a result of the numbering amendments made in this Bill to paragraph (iv) of the proviso to section 19(1) of the principal Act.

Clause 7 amends paragraph (a) of section 33 ("Rate of pension") by removing the word "average" as the rate relating to contributors to whom that paragraph applies will be based on the contributor's salary immediately preceding the date of [his] retirement.

Clause 8 repeals and replaces the proviso to section 34 ("Service qualifying for pension") by retaining the added service benefit with respect to police officers below the rank of superintendent, fire officers below the rank of divisional officer, prison officers below the rank of deputy commissioner, and members of staff of the Bermuda Regiment based on [the] ages referenced in section 19(1)(d) and paragraph (iv)(b), (c), (d), (e) or (f) of the proviso to section 19(1).

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 9 *[sic]* be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Excuse me?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: Anybody wish to speak on the motion?

No. Okay.

Any objections?

Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through [8] passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I move that clauses then 1 through 9 *[sic]* be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 9 *[sic]* be approved.

Are there any objections?

Approved.

Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

Just [to] correct the record it is clauses 1 through 8. I added a mystery clause.

The Chairman: Okay, but I did hear [clause] 9.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: No, I said [clause] 9.

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: I said it incorrectly.

The Chairman: Okay. Thank you very much.

Hon. E. David Burt: So, I just wanted to correct the record. That was not your fault. That was 100 per cent my fault.

The Chairman: Thank you. I feel better. Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I move that the preamble be approved.

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

[Would] anyone like to speak on that motion?

If not, is there any objection to that motion?

If there's no objection, the motion is moved.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Madam Chairman.

I move the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Would anyone like to speak to that?

If not, are there any objections?

If there are no objections to that motion, then it is agreed the Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Gavel]

[Motion carried: The Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:11 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION AMENDMENT ACT 2026

The Deputy Speaker: Members, it has been agreed that the Bill entitled Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be reported to the House as printed.

[Are there] any objections to that?

There are none.

So, that finishes [Order] No. 1 on the Order Paper. We now move to the consideration of the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24. Yes.

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 43(4) and 43(5), I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year [2023/24] be approved and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

Are there any objections to that?

There are none.

So moved.

I call on the Member from constituency 22.

House in Committee at 3:12 pm

[Mr. Scott Pearman, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2023/24

The Chairman: Thank you, Members. We are now in the Committee of Supply to consider . . . [Are] we going to do one at a time? Minister, one at a time? Yes.

[We are now in the Committee of Supply] to consider the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24.

Minister, you have the floor.

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

This Schedule identifies five items totalling \$16,701,803 to be included in Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for [financial] year 2023/24 made up of \$16,241,638 on current account and \$460,165 on capital account. Honourable Members will note and respect the total supplementary estimate for this year of the aforementioned \$16,701,803 are all technical supplementaries. A technical supplementary indicates that the requirement for additional funding can be met and was met within the originally appropriated estimates. However, they cannot be transferred since they are appropriated within another Ministry or capital account.

Following the completion of the 2023/24 financial statement on December 24, 2024, the total final current account spending for 2023/24 was \$977.5 million, which was \$4.9 million more than the original estimate of \$972.6 million. Interest and guarantee management costs were \$131.5 million, \$1.1 million [more] than the original estimate of \$130.4 million. Total

revenues in that year were \$1.177 billion or \$21.18 million higher than the original budget of \$1.16 billion.

Based upon the above factors, the budget deficits for the fiscal year 2023 . . . sorry, let me make sure I get this right. Got it. The budget deficit for fiscal year 2023/24 was \$29.5 million, \$14 million less than the original estimate of \$43.5 million. This is the third consecutive fiscal year where the fiscal deficit was less than originally forecast.

Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for [financial] year 2023/24 is directly related to

- Additional expenditures associated with the Ministry of Public Works stock adjustment for transition to Artemis, a building at the Quarry, and higher inventory usage; higher insurance premiums due to transition of a multiyear agreement, and Quarry transport products recharged in capital lease liabilities.
- Ministry of National Security GEHI claims for police officers on budget credit card commissions within customs, and additional overtime required within Department of Corrections, [and] fire services due to staff shortages.
- Total capital account spending for fiscal year 2023/24 was \$97.1 million, or \$1.1 million [above] the original budget of \$96 million. On the capital account, the total of \$460,000 additional capital expenditures relate to Ferry Bow Loading relocation; major building upgrade projects, and water and sewage capital maintenance at the Tynes Bay Waste-to-Energy facility.

In respect of capital expenditures, savings from existing capital projects have been identified. However, a technical supplementary is required to increase each overspent total authorised figure in 2023/24.

Honourable Members will recall the criteria for determining debatable supplementary estimates require that all items on the current account be debated if the total current account spend of a Ministry shows an increase of greater than 10 per cent, or \$250,000 when compared to the original estimate.

All capital items are debatable. Applying the criteria I've just described, all items on the current account and capital account are debatable. I would therefore move approval of the following items: Current account 1 through 2, all debatable. Capital account 3 through 5, all debatable.

The Chairman: Thank you, Premier.

I call on the Honourable Minister in charge, and that that would be the item 1, Head 36, which would be the Ministry of Public Works.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Minister, while you're on your feet, forgive me for asking you this question, but I believe I'd

heard the Premier to say that item 1 would be debatable, but—

Hon. E. David Burt: All debatable.

The Chairman: It is debatable. Thank you. Great.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: I have clarification.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: It is debatable. Okay, understood.

Minister, it has been confirmed that this item and the three heads that fall under this item, all of which are in your Ministry, are in fact debatable, and therefore you have the floor in relation to Supplementary [Estimate] [item] 1, Head 36, and [that] it now be taken under consideration.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

It has been moved that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 are now taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 will now be taken under consideration.

Minister, you have the floor.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as detailed in Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment seeks approval for supplementary provisions under current expenditure totalling \$8,668,876 and under capital expenditure totalling \$460,165.

Mr. Chairman, for clarity, I will address each department in turn, outlining first the current expenditure adjustments followed by capital expenditure adjustments. Mr. Chairman, I begin with the Ministry Headquarters, Head 36.

HEAD 36—MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

Hon. Jache Adams: Under the current expenditure, two adjustments are required, both relating to inventory. During the 2023/24 financial year, the Ministry's Stores Section, which is responsible for inventory management, relocated to a new facility at the Government Quarry. As part of this transition, a full reconciliation of inventory was undertaken. This resulted in a one-time adjustment to account for the disposal of obsolete stock

and to correct historical inventory records totalling \$630,000. Additionally, inventory usage during this fiscal year exceeded initial projections, reflecting higher operational activity across the Ministry. This resulted in a further \$400,000 in stock consumption. Mr. Chairman, there are no capital supplements required under this head.

HEAD 81—PUBLIC LANDS AND BUILDINGS

Hon. Jache Adams: Under current expenditure, a supplementary provision of \$1.2 million is required due to higher than expected insurance premiums. As Honourable Members are aware, the department is responsible for maintaining over 800 Government properties, the majority of which are insured and is therefore directly impacted by changes in insurance costs.

Mr. Chairman, there are two capital supplements required for this department. The first, in the amount of \$7,381, relates to the relocation of the Department of Marine and Ports Ferry Maintenance Facility. Honourable Members may be aware that this project was managed by the Department of Public Lands and Buildings and involved consolidating Marine and Ports Ferry Maintenance operations from multiple locations in Dockyard in Hamilton into a single, centralised facility in Dockyard. This adjustment reflects an administrative oversight that required an increase in the total allocated funding level, which has now been corrected.

The second capital supplemental, in the amount of \$115,075, relates to emergency works to repair central air conditioning units at two government buildings, namely the Government Administration Building and Global House.

HEAD 82—WORKS AND ENGINEERING

Hon. Jache Adams: Under current expenditure, a supplementary provision of \$6,038,876 is required to account for fuel supply, equipment maintenance, and asphalt production.

Mr. Chairman, what does this mean in practical terms? As Honourable Members are aware, the department's Quarry Section maintains much of the Government's land-based vehicle and heavy equipment fleet. While these assets are owned centrally, they are often operated by other departments.

For example, the Department of Sport and Recreation and the Department of Health make continuous use of vehicles owned by Works and Engineering. When these vehicles require fuel, they refuel at Quarry-managed sites. When servicing is needed, it is carried out by department mechanics. If vehicles are damaged, they are returned to the Quarry for repair. Historically, these services were recovered through a recharge mechanism whereby the operating department reimbursed the Department of Works and Engineering. However, this practice has not been consistently occurring within the current financial framework.

A similar arrangement exists for asphalt production, where the Quarry Section is responsible for production while the Highway Section is responsible for paving. As a result, costs that would previously have been distributed across departments have instead been absorbed entirely within Head 82 for this financial year.

Mr. Chairman, to be clear, this is not the result of any fault by any government entity or individual. Rather, it reflects limitations in an older system of recording operational costs, which is being modernised. Importantly, this does not represent an increase in overall government spending. It is, in fact, the reallocation of operational expenses between departments at the end of the fiscal year.

The Ministry continues to work closely with the Ministry of Finance to modernise these processes and improve the accuracy and transparency of cost allocation going forward.

Mr. Chairman, a further supplementary provision of \$400,000 is required under current expenditure for Head 82. This relates to a technical audit adjustment associated with the unwinding of capital lease liabilities rather than new expenditure.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to the request for a capital expenditure supplemental in the amount of \$337,709 in support of the Water and Sewage Capital Maintenance Programme. During the 2023/24 financial year, the department identified a significant leak in Prospect Water Reservoir 1, a critical asset that holds millions of gallons of potable water for public use. Emergency repair works were initiated immediately to contain the issue and maintain system integrity.

During this period, the department was required to procure water from the private sector to ensure the continued and uninterrupted delivery of essential services to the public.

The Chairman: Minister, could I just pause you for a moment? We were only dealing with item 1. I don't mind dealing with the capital items as long as there's no objection.

Does anyone have an objection to the Minister deal with capital?

No, no objection. Please continue.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Chairman: So, we're now doing Items 1 and 5. Yes.

Are you also speaking to public lands and buildings at item 4?

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes.

The Chairman: And you're not doing Marine and Ports, though?

Hon. Jache Adams: No.

The Chairman: Okay. So, we are now listening to the Minister who is taking under consideration item 1, which has already been addressed, and items 4 and 5 with no objection from the House. Thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Madam Chairman . . . I mean, Mr. Chairman, I'm on my last paragraph.

The Chairman: Sorry.

Hon. Jache Adams: No problem.

While the immediate repairs have been completed, more comprehensive refurbishment works are planned for this fiscal year. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Is there anyone who wishes to speak to Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 in relation to item 1, Heads 36, 81, 82, or items 4 or 5?

I recognise the Honourable Member for [constituency] 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm grateful to the Minister for the explanations, especially with respect to the lack of the recharges happening at the appropriate times. I'm glad to hear that the system is being improved. Obviously, controlling and managing costs of departments is important. I know some of these departments might have a lot of fuel costs as they drive around. So perhaps some FinTech could be applied to that.

[Laughter]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: I don't know. We seem to be big on that.

But I do have a material question about the insurance. I think we all understand about insurances going up, but I am really struggling to understand why it has taken us two years to find out about this increased insurance premium. So, I would love if the Minister could talk about that.

And in general, most of my concerns have to do with the long delays on some of these items. Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you to MP DeCouto.

Is there any other Member who wishes to speak on items 1, 4, or 5?

I recognise the Honourable Member for constituency 12, MP Cannonier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you. Thank you, and good afternoon.

Yes. Just on [item] 1, Public Works Headquarters, under stock adjustments, and I know that this has been . . . this is always an ongoing challenge within the Ministry. And we are talking about quite a bit of monies here. What I wanted to find out a little more about is

how we are advancing as far as getting workers and civil servants using more updated software. I recognise that in the past, when we were introducing new software to help them with stock adjustments and to be more accurate so we're not ordering wrong items, which was a big problem, people were still insisting on using Excel spreadsheets and the likes to do it. So how are we advancing when it comes to getting our people to order items and to make these stock adjustments come to an end, basically, so that we're much better at it and it's not in the tune of what we got over, just slightly over stock adjustments and inventory usage over a million dollars here?

Just a little more information about where we stand with updating and getting our people to use more updated systems to get us in a better place with stock.

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Thank you, MP Cannonier.

Is there any other Member who wishes to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none . . . Minister, thank you.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank the Honourable Members for their questions.

In relation to the insurance costs raised by the Member from [constituency] 25, I will note that the reason, as the Minister of Finance alluded to earlier, you'll recall there was a period where we were doing insurance in several years at a time, and the decision was to transition to a more annual payment, and thus it caused an increase because we are no longer doing sort of three years of payments instead of doing annually.

For the Honourable Member from [constituency] 12, I will say that considerable effort is being made, particularly in terms of investment and the software, to improve our inventory records. What is being referred to in this supplemental is as a result of the transition. We found that there was some inventory that was extremely old and obsolete that just had to be in stock for . . . Some were in there for decades, if I am being honest. And so the transition just simply allowed us to sort of correct our records and modify.

You will note that in the 2026/27 Budget, it was alluded [to] in terms of restructuring and improvements, one of which is the inventory changes that we are making. And so, the Ministry is reviewing our internal processes right now and certainly updates on the progress that we are making will be provided in the future.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Member, or Honourable Minister, rather.

Does any other Member wish to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none, Honourable Minister, may I ask that you move—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Chairman, I still—

The Chairman: I am sorry. I am so sorry. I did not see you, MP DeCouto. Please.

Honourable Member for constituency 25 has the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: [I am] grateful for the Minister's explanation about the insurance. I am still struggling with the fact that it has taken over two and a half years to find out about the million-dollar insurance increase, given that, for example, last year we would have debated the budget with the actuals for this year already sorted out, and I am trying to understand what the reason for that delay was.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Honourable Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will help.
Sometimes it is audit, so things can come up in audit—

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, do you yield?

Hon. E. David Burt: I was trying to answer the question.

Hon. Jache Adams: I yield the question to the Minister of Finance.

The Chairman: There we go. Thank you.
Honourable Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: I was trying to stand up and answer the question. You know, I am a Minister too. I thought you said "Minister." I thought you were talking to me.

The Chairman: [I] just thought I would check—

Hon. E. David Burt: Heh, heh.

The Chairman: That is protocol.
Honourable Premier and Minister of Finance, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: But the answer is, some of the time these things come up in audit, and that is the reason why sometimes it is late. So, when audit comes, we need to make sure the supplementary estimates match up to what comes back in audit.

The Chairman: Does any other Member wish to speak to items 1, 4, [or] 5?
I recognise the MP for constituency 25, MP DeCouto—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Well, I—

The Chairman: You have the floor.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Thank you, Mr. Premier and Minister of Finance.

I would love to know more about the issue that came up during audit around this million-dollars-of-insurance premium. I would love to know: Was it [a] premium that was missed? Was it just in the wrong account? . . . and so forth. So, thank you for giving us that information, and I look forward to some more colour on that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Does any other Member wish to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none, will the Government Minister kindly address the question posed?

Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Hon. E. David Burt: I am quite certain that we do not have that information offhand, but the reality is that things come up during audit. That is just what it is. And that is the reason why we are bringing a supplementary estimate all this way, just to make sure that we match up with where our expenses are, where it is. [I am] happy to see if that additional information can be sought and acquired, but I do not have that information right now. I am explaining to you when we have these types of things, it is typically from an audit perspective. I am uncertain if any technical officer is emailing, but I am saying on the broader topic this is the reason why these things come up.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.
Is there any other Member who wishes to pose questions on items 1, 4, or 5?
I recognise—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Just for the . . . Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: —the MP for constituency 25.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: For the record, I find it highly unsatisfactory that we have a million-dollar supplemental, and the Premier does not know the details.
Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, MP.
Is there any other Member who—

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. . . . Mr. . . .

The Chairman: No. I—

Hon. E. David Burt: I must say—

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: —it is not the question that we do not know. We do not have that information off the top of the head.

You are asking what led to the audit point. The Minister gave the explanation of the things. You are asking a specific question of the audit point. Ministers are not inside of audit meetings. That is the way it works. If you really want to find out what happens, call the Auditor General in front of the Public Accounts Committee. But we have also said, if you want, put forward, and we gave an undertaking that we will try to get you the answer.

I would ask, Honourable Chairman, if the Opposition Leader can control his Members.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

The Chairman: I think . . . I think—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Mr. Chairman, I am—

The Chairman: Excuse me, just for a minute.

We are in Committee, okay? We are in Committee. Let's not . . . Let's not, . . . It is not general debate.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister, and your point has been made and is for the record.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to items 1, 4, or 5?

There being none, will one of the Government Ministers (I suppose it is you, Honourable Minister) please move that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be approved?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be approved.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

It has been moved that item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 1, Heads 36, 81, and 82 are hereby approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works, Head 36; Public Land and Buildings, Head 81; Works and Engineering, Head 82 passed.]

The Chairman: Honourable Minister, would you like to move item 4?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 4, Heads 36, 81, and 82 *[sic]* be approved.

The Chairman: No, I think it is item 4, Head 65. Is it?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. Jache Adams: Yes, [Head] 65.

The Chairman: Thank you.

It has been moved that item 4, Head 65, be approved. Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none; it is approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works, Head 65, Public Lands and Buildings passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, if you could kindly move item 5, Head 65 as well . . .

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 4 *[sic]*, Head 64 . . . Sorry—

The Chairman: Five.

Hon. Jache Adams: —item 5, Head 65 be approved as well.

The Chairman: It has been moved by the Honourable Minister that item 5, Head 65, be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 5, Head 65 is approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Public Works, Head 65, Works and Engineering passed.]

The Chairman: We now move on to item 2, which I believe is for the Minister of National Security. Yes.

Minister, you have the floor.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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

I move that Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

It has been moved that item 2, Heads 7, 12 . . . you moved it 45 and then 25, so I will follow your lead.—

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Well, yes, [Head] 45.

The Chairman: —be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 do be taken under consideration.

Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Just as an FYI to you, Mr. Chairman, the reason I put 45 before 25 is that 25 is Corrections, and that is no longer under my Ministry. So, I am going to do my current Ministry as well.

The Chairman: Are you going to deal with Head 25 as well, nonetheless?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I will. I will. Yes.

The Chairman: [I am] grateful, Minister. Please continue.

HEAD 7—BERMUDA POLICE SERVICE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: So, Head 7, the overspend is \$1,165,566 [million] *[sic]*. Mr. Chairman, that . . . [\$1,165,5]68 [million], I am sorry . . . This overspend, Mr. Chairman, is the Condition of Service section, which states “all members of the [Bermuda] Police Service shall be entitled, without payment, to such medical advice and treatment . . .” So, to ensure that the premise of this article is met, GEHI [Government Employee Health Insurance] pays all copayments on behalf of police officers. So, at the year-end 2023/24, the BPS [Bermuda Police Service] received several outstanding invoices from GEHI related to coverage. GEHI had paid on behalf of the Bermuda Police Service in respect of co-payments for various police officers. So, that is the result of that \$1.1 million, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

HEAD 12—CUSTOMS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay. Head 12—the overspend can be linked to the [credit] card commission charges. No budget was provided in 2023/24 for [credit] card commission charges, but actual expenditure was . . . I am just jumping, Mr. Chairman . . . \$154,928.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Moving right on to Head 25. I am Head . . . I said Head 45 first, and then I will come back to [Head] 25.

The Chairman: Yes, Fire Services.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay.

The Chairman: Yes.

HEAD 45—FIRE SERVICES

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: So, the overspend for Fire [Services] relates to staffing levels. The number of

actual full-time equivalents was 140, which is significantly lower than the original estimate of 156 for the financial year 2023/24. So, the greatest impact was experienced within the operations division, which functioned with only 57 full-time equivalents below the original projection.

Also, Mr. Chairman, the East End Ambulance Service, the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service [BFRS], runs a nightly ambulance service at the Island's East End from 6:00 pm to 8:00 am, while the Bermuda Hospitals Board [BHB] handles the daytime coverage. So, due to limited resources and staff shortages, the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service incurred overtime for two full-time EMTs each night, which equates to approximately \$900,000 overtime for the year 2023/24. Combined approximately . . . was . . . incurred . . . with . . . \$3,403,586 was incurred in overtime costs.

Other factors that impacted overtime include vacation, sick leave, and firefighter overseas travel to complete mandatory revalidation training. Overseas consultants were engaged to work at the L. F. Wade International Airport until Bermudians could be hired. An expenditure of \$1,138,987 was incurred during the 2023/24 financial year as a conclusion of this project. The BFRS hired and trained 23 Bermudians to replace the consultant firefighters at the L. F. Wade International Airport. Forty aircraft rescue firefighters travelled overseas to complete mandatory revalidation training to comply with the Bermuda Civil Aviation Authority regulatory requirements to support operations at the L. F. Wade International Airport. This resulted in an expenditure of \$170,685 above the approved estimate for the training of the business unit 55150. Other expenditure is attributed to contracted salary, ex gratia, and benefit awards negotiated with the unions.

This concludes my explanation, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any Members who wish to speak on item 2, Heads 7, 12, 25, or 45?

Yes. I recognise the Honourable Member Jarion Richardson, MP.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, having reviewed these estimates, they raise concerns. I have several questions to put to the Minister, but I will go through my concerns first.

In Head 45, the largest National Security item in the supplement is for Fire Services seeking \$4.3 million for overtime. And when I look back at the 2023/24 Budget Book, it includes the 2022/23 revised estimate, a total budget of the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service at \$17 million, and then it was reduced to \$14.8 million. So, the budgetary planning process led to someone projecting that they are going to spend significantly less money in the space of \$3 million. So, my question is,

now that the Government has returned for a \$4.3 million increase that is in overtime, this looks like an area of workforce planning, an area where it is lacking.

Similarly, Mr. Chairman, on Head 25, we are looking at a request of [\$]1.8 [million] or [\$]1.9 [million] in overtime payments. And we already saw an increase in the 2023/24 budget estimates. So, we were already raising how much we were budgeting, and then we are going back again, sometime later, and getting yet again more money, which again speaks to an issue with planning.

The GEHI, I will simply put as a matter of a question, but my concern relates to the length of time for the copays to arrive in house.

And lastly, my concern around the credit card on Head 12, \$154,928 for credit card commission—I am not entirely sure what that would entail, given that it is not an emergency public safety issue, and yet it appears alongside them.

So, my questions to the Honourable Minister as it relates to the 2023/24 Ministry of National Security supplements is, first, Why is more than 80 per cent of the 2023/24 National Security supplemental overtime? Why is it overtime? And what does that say about our workforce planning? My second question is, Why was Fire Services budgeted at \$14.8 million when the prior year's revised estimate was \$17 million? In other words, why did we reduce it? And then why are we now coming back looking for \$4.3 [million] more for the budget, specifically for overtime?

And my third question is, What are the main drivers of \$1.9 [million] or \$1.8 million in the Corrections overtime? And finally, Mr. Chairman, which of these items was unforeseen? Because a lot of these look like they could have been anticipated.

I will modify one of my questions to the Honourable Minister who spoke to the original projection, or Head 45, about the East End Ambulance and the requirement for two full-time EMTs overnight. Can he outline the nature of the relationship between the Bermuda Hospitals Board and the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service, because I am not sure I am understanding the logic in why BFRS is providing this when it is a Hospitals Board issue? And would we not be anticipating getting compensated from their line item budgets instead of out of our budget?

Thank you.

The Chairman: Thank you, MP Richardson.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

Yes, I recognise MP Cannonier.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you.

[I have] just one question. Under Police, [Head] 7, the GEHI claims, [I am] just curious. How long . . . Considering the fact that we are talking 2023/24 budget—we are into 2026/27 budget now—how long can a claim be outstanding? I do not know myself with

GEHI. But how long can a claim be outstanding? And if there is a time, what is that time or cutoff date that you can then put a claim in after a few years?

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 2 and the heads thereunder?

[No audible response]

The Chairman: No.

There being none, Minister, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I will start with Mr. Cannonier first. I do not have the answer as to how long a claim could be outstanding, but I will try to find that answer.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Okay. Yes. Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Not just for you but for us. I have no idea.

Now, [regarding] the GEHI payments, to the Honourable Member from [constituency] 23, his first question was the GEHI payments also from Head 7. I do not know how long it takes for them to get in-house, and I think that is just a processing issue, probably not by Police [Service] but between GEHI and the Police [Service]. So not sure on that.

Now, the card payments, . . . The card payments are just processing payments that happen during the course of the credit and debit card transactions. So why they are with the operational portion, I am not sure, but the overspend is just linked to [credit] card commission charges. There is not much else I could explain as to why they are together.

Now, the EMT situation down at the St. George's Fire Service, is a partnership between BHB and the Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service. The Bermuda Fire and Rescue operates the ambulance from 8:00 pm in the evening until 6:00 am in the morning, and BHB does the 6:00 am to the 8:00 pm [shift]. That partnership is a part of an MOU [a memorandum of understanding], and it has been operating like that for the last, I think, five, six, maybe, or longer years. And as a result, the BFRS addresses or takes care of and pays the hours from 8:00 pm to 6:00 am, and from 6:00 am to 8:00 pm, the BHB picks up their tab.

And Corrections, the overtime in Corrections—it comes down to a staff shortage. It is a uniformed services issue that we have that as much as we do recruitment two, three, maybe four (I want to say four) times a year, sometimes two, maybe three times a year, we are still having difficulty getting the number of persons needed to operate not only Corrections but other uniformed services. So, until we are able to solve that issue and get in the requisite number of employees needed, overtime is going to be a part of the equation.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

Yes, I see Honourable Member Jarion Richardson, constituency 23.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. I thank the Honourable Minister for his explanations and would reiterate, Why are we looking at that \$17 million budgeting in 2022/23 and then [in] 2023/24 where we see it reduced to \$14 million, but now we are going to see that increase in \$4.3 [million]?

The Minister, I believe, said that this is due to the recruiting issue, and we also see that in Corrections as a recruiting issue. So, if the Honourable Member could speak to . . . I think our obligation here, Mr. Chairman, is to ensure that the money is well spent, that we are planning as much as possible and getting ahead of these problems. And these are problems. And, as Kissinger said, *an issue ignored is a crisis invited*. So, the question for us, I believe, is, What are we doing to make sure this stops happening? Not so much why it happened now.

And so, I thank the Honourable Minister for his comments on what are we doing to get ahead of this so that we do not have this exact same scenario next year.

The Chairman: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We all want to get to the bottom of this here. All we can do is just keep trying, keep recruiting. And where we need to have overseas recruitment, we do. But this is a situation that is ongoing. And we just keep on recruiting, keep on recruiting, keep on recruiting hopefully till we get to the point that we have the requisite numbers to help to keep Bermuda safe.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Does any other Member have questions on item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

There being none, Honourable Minister, would you like to move item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25?

Thank you.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 be approved.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

It has been moved that item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 2, Heads 7, 12, 45, and 25 are hereby approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of National Security, Head 7 Bermuda Police Service; Head 12, Customs; Head 25,

Corrections; and Head 45, Bermuda Fire and Rescue Service passed]

The Chairman: I think we have one last item, [item] 3. And is Minister Darrell behind you, Minister? I cannot see. Yes, there he is.

Minister Darrell, we have item 3. Would you like to move that item 3 be taken under consideration?

MINISTRY OF TOURISM AND TRANSPORT, CULTURE AND SPORT

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 3, Head 65 now be taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

It has been moved that item 3, Head 65 now be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, Minister, you have the floor.

HEAD 65—MARINE AND PORTS

Hon. Owen Darrell: Mr. Chairman, Honourable Members of this House will be aware that the Department of Marine and Ports Services, through the Works and Engineering section, undertook infrastructure improvements at Hunter's Wharf to support the efficient operation of the ferry service. Two piles were installed to provide lay-by berthing for ferries, so vessels would not need to thrust into the dock while waiting between scheduled services.

In addition to the replacement of winches, controls, and cables for the Rockaway Bow Loading Facility, the project had a TAF of \$250,000, and a total final expenditure was \$265,668. This represents an overspend of \$15,668, as explained below.

This project recorded an overspend of \$7,381 in 2023/24, and \$8,287 in 2024/25, representing approximately 3 per cent of the total project's cost in each year. The variance was due to minor, unanticipated technical adjustments that were required to successfully and safely complete the project.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Is there any Member who wishes to speak to item 3 . . . item 3, Head 65, rather.

There being none, Minister, would you like to move it be approved?

Hon. Owen Darrell: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I now move that item 3, Head 65 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 3, Head 65 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport, Head 65, Capital Development, passed.]

[Crosstalk]

The Chairman: Oh, I am sorry. I apologise. I did not invite the Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you. I did not know we were done.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: My sincere apologies.

The Chairman: No, no. My apologies, Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 as printed be reported to the House.

The Chairman: It has been moved that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 be approved by the Committee and reported to the House as printed.
No objection; agreed to.

[Motion carried: Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2023/24 was considered by the Committee of Supply and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 3:55 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) 2023/24

The Deputy Speaker: Members, it has been agreed that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2023/24 be reported to the House as printed, and there are no objections to that. That was agreed to.

That takes us to the third item of the day, which is consideration of the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

I call on the Minister of Finance and Premier.

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

In accordance with Standing Order 43(4) and 43(5), I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year [2024/25] be approved and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply to consider such.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that we resolve into Committee of Supply to consider the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

Are there any objections?

There are none. So moved.

I call on the Member from constituency 22 to assume the Chair.

House in Committee at 3:56 pm

[Mr. Scott Pearman, Chairman]

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) 2024/25

The Chairman: Honourable Members, we are now in the Committee of Supply for consideration of Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25.

I now call upon the Honourable Minister of Finance to present in relation to the supplementary.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Long time no see.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: All right.

Mr. Chairman, this schedule identifies five items totalling \$20,446,149 to be included in the Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25, made up of \$17,022,625 on current accounts and \$3,423,524 on capital accounts.

Honourable Members will note and respect the total Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 that the \$20,446,14[9] are all a technical supplementary. A technical supplementary indicates requirement for additional funding can be met within the original appropriate estimates, however, cannot be transferred since they are appropriated within another Ministry or capital account.

Following the completion of the 2024/25 financial statements on December 9, 2025, the final total current account spending for fiscal year 2024/25 was \$1 billion, which was \$14 million, or 1.4 per cent more than the original estimate of \$992 million.

Debt service and guarantee management costs were \$129 million, which is approximately \$1 million more than the original estimate of \$128 million.

Total revenues in fiscal year 2024/25 were \$1.266 billion, or \$33.3 million, [or] 2.7 per cent higher than the original budget of \$1.232 billion.

Based on the above factors, the budget surplus—I say budget surplus—was \$29 million above the original budget surplus of \$210,000, and this was the first budget surplus achieved in 21 years.

Supplementary Estimate [(No.2)] for fiscal year 2024/25 is directly related to

- additional expenditures associated with [the] Ministry of Education negotiated pay award salaries for fiscal year 2024/25;
- [the] Ministry of Public Works merger of Bermuda Land Development Company [BLDC]

and West End Development Corporation [WEDCO], which created the Bermuda Land Management Corporation [BLMC];

- quarry transport product recharges to the Ministry of National Security;
- [the Royal] Bermuda Regiment's negotiated pay award salaries for fiscal year 2024/25;
- Hurricane Ernesto embodiment;
- rent for Moresby House;
- Coast Guard maintenance;
- operational posts;
- police GEHI claims;
- recruitment activities;
- legal costs;
- customs;
- credit/debit card commissions;
- vehicle insurance;
- acting pay; [and]
- additional overtime required within [Bermuda] Police [Services], Department of Corrections, and Customs due to staff shortages.

Also, total capital account spending for fiscal year 2024/25 was \$101.7 million, or \$10.6 million, 9.5 per cent below the original budget of \$112.3 million. On the capital account, the total of \$3.4 million additional capital expenditures relate to ferry bow loading relocation, dangerous walls and rock cuts, and water sewage capital maintenance at the Tynes Bay Waste-to-Energy Facility.

In respect of capital expenditures, savings from existing capital projects has been identified. However, a technical supplementary is required to increase each overspent total authorised figure in 2024/25.

All the Members will recall that the criteria for determining debatable supplementary estimates requires all items on current accounts be debated if the total current account spend of a Ministry shows an increase of greater than 10 per cent or \$250,000 when compared to the original estimate. And all capital items are debatable. Applying the criteria I just described, all items on the current account and capital account are debatable, and I will therefore move the approval of the following items: current account [items] 1 through 3, which are all debatable; and capital account [items] 4 [and] 5, which are all debatable.

The Chairman: I thank the Honourable Minister of Finance for his presentation to this Honourable House.

There are five items in this supplementary estimate to be considered. I hereby call on the Minister in charge of item 1 to proceed, and I recognise the Honourable Junior Minister, MP Lister.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 1, Head 17 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: Thank you, Junior Minister.

It has been moved that item 1, Head 17 be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 1, Head 17, is now taken under consideration.

Please proceed, [Junior] Minister.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

HEAD 17—DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I rise to inform Members of this Honourable House of Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for the Department of Education, Head 17, for fiscal year 2024/25. The requested supplementary estimate is \$277,764. Honourable Members may recall that in March 2025 the Government announced salary increases for public officers across six union partners, representing seven bargaining units. The salary negotiation process resulted in agreements that recognise the valuable contributions of public officers and address salary pressures associated with the increased cost of living. The negotiated uplifts were finalised near the end of the 2024/25 fiscal year and included increases for members of the Bermuda Public Services Union, the Bermuda Industrial Union, and the Bermuda Union of Teachers.

While the salary uplifts applied to the 2024/25 fiscal year, the payments themselves were processed during fiscal year 2025/26. In accordance with the standard public accounting practises, these expenditures must be recorded in the fiscal year to which they apply, namely 2024/25. Accordingly, these funds were used to support salary uplifts for principals, teachers, counsellors, paraprofessionals, and other staff essential to the delivery of educational services and school operations across the public school system.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you.

Are there any Members who wish to speak to item 1, Head 17?

There being none, [Junior] Minister, would you like to move the head for approval?

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Mr. Chairman, I move that item 1, Head 17 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 1, Head 17 be approved.

Are there any objections to that motion?

There being none; approved.

[Motion carried: Ministry of Education, Head 17, passed.]

The Chairman: I now call upon the Minister in charge of item 2 to proceed.

It is [the Ministry of] Public Works and Environment.

MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS AND ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, with your indulgence, I ask that I be able to move items 2, 4, and 5, Heads 36, 82, 65, and 82 all at once.

The Chairman: Yes. So, it has been proposed by the Honourable Minister that we deal with item 2, Heads 36 [and] 82; item 4, Head 65; [and] item 5, Head 65 *[sic]* all at once.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, Minister, please proceed.

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I think there is just a bit of a correction.

The Chairman: Right.

Hon. Jache Adams: [Under] item 5, I believe it is Head 82.

The Chairman: All right. On my sheet, it says [Head] 65, but you are correcting that to [Head] 82.

Hon. Jache Adams: Correct.

The Chairman: Thank you very much for the correction, Minister. Duly noted.

Any objection to that correction?

There being none, please proceed.

HEAD 36—MINISTRY HEADQUARTERS

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, as detailed in Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25, the Ministry of Public Works and Environment seeks approval for supplementary provisions under current expenditure totalling \$7,568,181 and under capital expenditure totalling \$3,423,524. Mr. Chairman, as with my earlier presentation, I will address each department in turn, outlining first the current expenditure adjustments followed by the capital expenditure adjustments.

Mr. Chairman, I begin with the Ministry Headquarters, Head 36. Under current expenditure, two adjustments are required. The primary adjustment relates to the establishment of the Bermuda Land Management Corporation. Honourable Members will recall the merger of two government quangos, the West End Development Corporation [WEDCO] and the Bermuda Land Development Company [BLDC]. This supplementary arises from a \$4.7 million accounting adjustment associated with the Government's investment in BLDC. Previously, these shares were held by the

Minister of Public Works [and Environment]. Following the merger of the BLDC and WEDCO, the investment structure changed, and the shares were transferred to BLMC, the newly formed entity. This required a one-time accounting adjustment to reflect the revised ownership. While presented as an overrun, it is important to emphasise that this does not represent new expenditure but rather a technical accounting entry. Mr. Chairman, there are no capital supplements required under this head.

And so, I now turn to the Department of Marine and Ports. And if I beg your indulgence, I am speaking on behalf of the Minister responsible for Marine and Ports,—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: —as Public Works was responsible for the management of said project.

Mr. Chairman, there is one capital supplemental required for this department in the amount of \$15,668. This relates to the relocation of the Department of Marine and Ports' ferry maintenance facility to a centralised location in Dockyard, a project managed by the Department of Public Lands and Buildings. The adjustment reflects increases in material costs encountered during construction.

HEAD 82—WORKS AND ENGINEERING

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman, I now move to Head 82—

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Jache Adams: —Works and Engineering.

Under current expenditure, a supplementary provision of \$2,868,181 is required to account for fuel supply, equipment, maintenance, and asphalt production. As outlined in my previous presentation, the government quarry maintains the majority of the Government's land-based vehicle fleet. While these assets are currently maintained, they are operated by various departments. At present, the Department [of Works and Engineering] does not consistently recover costs through a recharge mechanism for the maintenance services it provides to those user departments. The same applies to the production of asphalt. As a result, these costs are absorbed within the Ministry.

Mr. Chairman, to be clear, this is not the result of any failure on the part of a government entity or individual. Rather, it reflects legacy practices in how operational costs have been recorded, alongside ongoing changes in accounting procedures. Importantly, this does not result in additional costs to Government overall. It is, in effect, a reallocation of operational expenses between departments at year-end.

Mr. Chairman, as noted previously, the Ministry continues to work closely with the Ministry of Finance to address this matter.

Mr. Chairman, I now turn to capital expenditure. A supplemental provision of \$2,428,844 is requested for dangerous walls and rock cuts, and a supplemental provision of \$979,012 is requested for the Water and Sewage capital maintenance programme. Both of these are the result of an administrative oversight between the Ministry and the Ministry of Finance, which required an increase in the total allocated funding level, which has now been corrected.

To be clear, this is not new spend, rather, [it is due to] the TAF level not being increased appropriately during the 2024/25 fiscal budgetary process. Again, this has been corrected, as noted in the 2026/27 budget book.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any Members who wish to speak to items 2, 4, and 5?

There being none, Minister, would you like to move that item 2, Heads 36 and 82 be approved?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 2, Heads 36 and 82 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 2, Heads 36 and 82 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 2, Heads 36 and 82 are approved.

[Motion carried: Public Works and Engineering, Heads 36 and 82 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, item 4, [Head 65]?

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 4, Head 65 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 4, Head 65 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 4, Head 65 is approved.

[Motion carried: Marine and Ports, Head 65 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister, item 5, please.

Hon. Jache Adams: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that item 5, Head 82 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 5, Head 82, as corrected, be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There is no objection to that motion.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Works and Engineering, Head 82 passed.]

The Chairman: May I now call upon—

Hon. Jache Adams: Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: I am sorry. Yes. Thank you. Thank you, Minister.

May I call upon the Minister responsible for item 3, please? Minister of National Security, Minister Weeks.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45 be now taken under consideration.

The Chairman: You have changed up the order on me.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I did.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45 be taken under consideration.

Is there any objection to that motion?

There being none, item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45 are now taken under consideration.

Minister, you have the floor.

MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

HEAD 6—DEFENCE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The overspend for Head 6 [is] related to salaries, increases for salary uplifts that were awarded, Hurricane Ernesto embodiment, and retroactive pay. Also, Mr. Chairman, the overspend [is] related to rental costs for Moresby House, for the Coast Guard, and overspend related to additional Coast Guard costs for repairs, maintenance, fuel, and other expenses. The overtime related for the salary uplifts, Hurricane Ernesto, and retroactive pay was \$452,975. Overspend related to the rental costs was \$142,857, and the overspend related to additional Coast Guard costs for repairs, maintenance, fuel, and other expenses was \$155,734.

HEAD 7—BERMUDA POLICE SERVICE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Chairman, the explanation [of] overspends for Head 7 [are as follows]: The conditions of . . . To ensure that the premise of this article is met . . . And the article says, "All members of the

Bermuda Police Service shall be entitled, without payment, to such medical advice and treatment.” To ensure that the premise of this article is met, GEHI . . . Hang on, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: During the 2024/25 financial year, it was paid out in January 2025. The Bermuda Police Association received retroactive increases for the years 2022/23 (which was 2.25 per cent), and 2023/24 (which was also 2.25 per cent). These awards resulted in increased costs for overtime. According to the payroll register dated the 31st of January 2025, the BPS paid an additional \$449,000 in retroactive overtime. In addition, the overtime budget was underfunded by \$1,278,942.26. Therefore, the total overspend and overtime amounted to \$1,728,704.

The Chairman: Yes.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Yes?

The Chairman: Yeah, I see that.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Okay. During the financial year, the BPS had several legal cases which resulted in an expenditure of \$1,241,224 against a budgeted amount of \$400,000. Thus, an overspend of \$841,224 was incurred. The overspend was attributable to expenditure as follows. Case A, legal costs were \$245,000. Case B, costs were \$65,000. Case C, costs were \$256,907.26. Case D, costs were \$100,000. And case E was \$475,000. Also, Mr. Chairman, during the year, the BPS was billed \$918,476 by GEHI, again related to the above noted recoverables. That expenditure resulted in an overspend of \$575,000.

So, during the financial year, the BPS engaged in extensive recruiting activities also, resulting in an expenditure of \$153,365 against a budget of \$24,400. The result was an overspend of \$128,965.

HEAD 12—CUSTOMS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Moving on to Head 12, Mr. Chairman, Customs [had an] overspend of \$546,745. The largest item in this, Mr. Chairman, is the [credit] card commission of \$339,000. Historically, Customs has not provided a budget for this expense line. It is not an expense that directly pertains to border control operations, but purely on the collection of revenue. So, it is extremely difficult to predict and in practise beyond the control of Customs. Given that this expense directly correlates with the amount of revenue collected, it creates the situation where the more successful Customs is at collecting revenue, the more fees are incurred.

Overtime was significantly underfunded for 2024/25. The overspend for the period was \$129,394. The other significant item for which we have not

historically provided a budget is acting pay, which totals \$68,000 for fiscal year 2024/25.

Moving on to . . .

The Chairman: Head 25.

HEAD 25—CORRECTIONS

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: —Head 25, Corrections. The overspend for Corrections in 2024/25 was all due to overtime expenditure. Overtime for the period was generated as a result of the same factors as was the previous year. During 2024/25, there were six inmates who were hospitalised. Their length of stay ranged from 2 to 27 days. Inmates who were placed on suicide observation required continuous one-on-one supervision, which generated unavoidable overtime. So, during this fiscal year, there were 11 inmates on suicide observation with each requiring two to seven days of continuous observation.

HEAD 45—BERMUDA FIRE SERVICE

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Moving on, Mr. Chairman, to Head 45, again, Mr. Chairman, it comes down to overtime and staffing levels. And recruitment is ongoing—ongoing to try to get the requisite number of employees in the Fire Service. So that is my presentation for . . .

The Chairman: Thank you to Honourable Minister Michael Weeks, Minister of National Security, for his presentation on item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45.

Are there any Honourable Members who wish to speak to those heads?

Yes, I recognise Jarion Richardson, MP for constituency 23.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman. I almost promoted you there.

We . . . I . . . I want to speak to the Heads 7 and 25, and 45, and 12 as well. Along the item of overtime costs, the Honourable Minister has given a reasonable explanation as to what took place, [what] incurred those expenses. But I think one of the problems we have with supplementary estimates, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, is [that] it is a relatively dry topic, and it has . . . It is difficult to ascertain what the actual impact of these numbers are.

What I can tell you as a former uniformed serviceman is when I see overtime, I get worried because overtime means that we do not have enough people on the ground in Corrections, in fire [service], in EMT, in police. That means that you have tired uniformed officers. You have overworked uniformed officers. You have families broken up by overworked uniformed officers. You have missed family functions, and you have EMTs showing up who have just done so much overtime that it is very hard to keep going. So, what I am seeing right here is evidence not of a recruitment

deficiency or a lack of work planning but a lack of effectiveness.

Right now, although the Honourable Minister of Finance and Premier was able to speak to a budget surplus, he is dancing on overworked and extremely tired uniformed servicemen. And we have in the Opposition, a Member who was formerly of the Correction service as well. And I can tell you that showing up to a call after working your tush off is a bad idea, so much so that on a double-crewed car one night about 3:30 [am] on a certain road in Bermuda, there was a fight of some 50-odd people, and we got stuck in to save a lady, to get her out of that fight. And our backup consisted of a single-crewed car from St. George's who had just finished an overtime shift.

So, this budget line item is dry. This topic is dry. But I can assure it is extremely wet with the sweat and blood of the uniformed services. And so, this Minister, I encourage him to continue on these recruitment efforts. And the next time we have this conversation, I will be a lot less polite about my expectations.

The Chairman: Thank you, MP Richardson.

[Laughter]

The Chairman: Is there any other Member who wishes to speak to item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25, and 45?

There being none, I call upon the Minister for item 3.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I take the comments of the Honourable Member from [constituency] 23 to heart, but the effort that the uniformed services is putting in for recruitment, I cannot say it enough, I mean, we are reaching out to the same pool of other uniformed services. You know, they are all in the same pool. We now are considering . . . As I have said in this House before, after we exhaust the pool of Bermudians, we are looking . . . we look to the spouse of Bermudians. We are looking to resident non-Bermudians. And then finally, we look overseas. So, trust me when I say that the uniformed services in every aspect are looking because they understand what you have explained as a former uniformed service member, that it does get tiring. It does cause burnout and the like. This recruitment thing is one of the priorities in all my uniformed services. And I, like you, hope that next year, if I am the one standing here, we talk a little less about the impact of overtime.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister Michael Weeks.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak to item 3 and the heads they are under?

There being none, Minister, would you kindly move that your item and heads be approved?

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Chairman, I now move that item 3, Head 6, which is Defence; Head 7, which is Police; [head] 12, Customs, [Head] 45, Fire; and [Head] 25, Corrections, be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that item 3, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25 and 45 be approved.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. Agreed to.

[Motion carried: Ministry of National Security, Heads 6, 7, 12, 25 and 45 passed.]

The Chairman: Minister of Finance, I will not forget you this time.

Hon. Michael A. Weeks: I am all done?

The Chairman: You are done.

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

Mr. Chairman. I move that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: Thank you, Minister of Finance.

It has been moved that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 be approved by the Committee and reported to the House as printed.

Is there any objection to that motion?

No objection. Agreed to.

Oh—

[Timer chimes]

The Chairman: It is out of buzz.

[Motion carried: Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) 2024/25 was considered by the Committee of Supply and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 4:25 pm

[Ms. Lovitta F. Foggo, Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATE (NO. 2) 2024/25

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, Members. It has been reported to the House that Supplementary Estimate (No. 2) for financial year 2024/25 be reported to the House as printed without objection . . . no objections, right?

An Hon. Member: No objections.

The Deputy Speaker: Right. So that is indeed approved.

I understand that for the Orders of the Day, these are the three items that were being considered.

So, I now move that we have the third reading.
Yes.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be now read for the third time by its title only.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be read a third time by its title only.

Any objections?

There are none.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL**THIRD READING****PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION
AMENDMENT ACT 2026**

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now move that the Bill entitled the Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 be now read for a third time by its title only and passed.

The Deputy Speaker: It has now been moved that the said Bill be read by its title for a third time and passed.

Are there any objections?

There are none. The Bill is passed.

[Motion carried: The Public Service Superannuation Amendment Act 2026 was given a third reading and passed.]

The Deputy Speaker: I think that that is the only thing because those are supplementary estimates.

Premier, go ahead.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, I now move that this Honourable House do adjourn until the date of Friday, the 12th of June 2026 at 10:00 am.

The Deputy Speaker: It has been moved that the House do now recess until June 12, [at] 10:00 am.

Are there any persons who wish to speak to this motion?

Oh, I recognise the Member from constituency 23.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Yes. Thank you, Madam—

The Deputy Speaker: Member, you have the floor.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

I intend to pick up where I left off, and I will speak to this topic until everyone is bored of it because the roads are still bad.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: And I am . . . I am . . . This Honourable House has to do something about it because, Madam Deputy Speaker, since we spoke about this last in this Honourable House, there have been three additional fatalities on the roads. And my understanding is a person passed away in the hospital from a road traffic accident in April. So, [that is] four fatalities since we last spoke in this House about the state of the roads. And this House is the place [from] where action must stem because it is clear that this issue stretches across our community and across our systems.

As we ferret and look for answers, we have fallen into the trap of oversimplification of a very tough and thorny issue. Whether we constantly are speaking to . . . We have education programmes where we are basically just asking people to obey the law now. We just come out right now and we [say], *Well, please follow the law*, I guess. So, all of the campaigns are strange. I saw [that] the chief inspector—the retired chief inspector—of roads policing said again that the traffic collisions are now up to 6 to 12 a day. So, I do not know if *please* and *thank you* is going to get this done.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also noticed that we oversimplify the issue of why these road traffic accidents are happening. The going theory in the community seems to be that it is either speed or drink driving. And I will speak to the speed because last time we spoke about the speed cameras—and so much so that there was a point of order speaking to when these speed cameras will be deployed—[that] they are currently being tested, and when they are going to be deployed. But Madam Deputy Speaker, we have been talking about speed cameras since 2010 when the then Honourable Acting . . . the Honourable Deputy Premier, Dr. Ewart Brown, directed the then Public Safety Minister, Randy Horton.

An Hon. Member: That is wrong.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: No.

An Hon. Member: The Premier—

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Oh.

The Deputy Speaker: Speak to the Chair.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Thank you.

And that was as covered in *The Royal Gazette*. And I thank my colleagues for providing that information. So, we have now been going on about this for quite some time, and we still do not have the speed cameras. But I would submit that if it was so simple that it was just speed, then we should have been on top of this. I think it is more than that.

Let's talk about drunk driving, a part of our culture that is as unacceptable today as it has ever been. The simple fact of the matter is, Madam Deputy Speaker, that it is not unfamiliar for a lot of people to have more than a few drinks and take to the road. And our solution to that seems to be yet more of the same in terms of, *Please, stop doing it. I will thank you if you do.*

Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the most absurd laws I have ever seen is one where we tell the drunk drivers where we are going to be when we arrest them. I just find that impractical and ridiculous. And I am sure that there is a very brilliant attorney somewhere in Bermuda who is going to explain to me why telling drunk drivers where we are is how we do it. But it is clear as day that we need to stop advertising our checkpoints. Our checkpoints are there to enforce the laws as they should be at that place in time that that checkpoint is established. It does us no good if all of us are just simply figuring out where the checkpoint is and then just going around it and continuing to flagrantly break the law.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I also spoke last week to the ticketing system and how archaic it is, how long it takes, not only for the individual officer to issue the summons, but further for them to put it into the computer system and for it to reach the courts via the DPP [Department of Public Prosecutions]. As it stands right now, this is breaking the very basic principle of *justice delayed is justice denied*. The simple fact of the matter is we cannot have and cannot afford . . . We literally just spoke about overtime for our police officers. We literally just spoke about overtime for our uniformed services. So, we know they are overstretched, and yet what we give them is archaic solutions or archaic tools to fix a very modern problem. The fact of the matter is that they need to be able to issue these tickets very quickly and get the person before the courts.

But that takes me to my next point, Madam Deputy Speaker. Why are they going to court? If it is a low-level offence, our summons system currently requires them to attend Plea Court, and anyone who has been to Plea Court knows how long that takes and just how complicated that process is. The simple fact of the matter is that a simple speeding ticket should be effectively enforced as a matter of choice. You can elect to simply pay the fine and get it over with, thereby allowing

more police officers to be on the streets, more tickets to be issued, more people held accountable for the sub-par and dangerous, reckless driving we are seeing.

Madam [Deputy Speaker], I am speaking to an issue where again we saw four deaths in two weeks. This is way out of control. It is not even vaguely reasonable now. We do not have that much road. How are we having this situation?

And finally, Madam . . . or second point, Madam Deputy Speaker, is the coroner. We have already spoken about and are well aware that that process is under consultation. But the fact of the matter is, there is not enough of them, and we are not finding out why. We are not finding out why people are dying on these roads. That is key because how are we then going to develop the solutions to stop it from happening? Again, we go to the oversimplification. We [say], *Oh, that one must have been speed, or That one must have been drinking*. But we do not know, and no one knows. And so, the fact is that we cannot deploy our resources to actually stop the issue that is getting everyone killed. Again, [there have been] four fatalities.

And finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, there is an issue that can be dealt with by the Ministry of National Security, and I definitely encourage the Honourable Minister. And that is police statistics. If you look right now on the police website, you will see that that information is outdated as [all] get out. You will see that the strategic plan for the Bermuda Police Service is outdated. You will see that a number of the documents, public-facing documents to tell us what is happening with the Bermuda Police Service and how they are going to stop these issues from happening, are outdated. So, we are making oversimplified decisions. We are making uninformed decisions, and we are still losing more and more people all the time now.

[There are] four dead [in] two weeks. [The] time of talking is over. [The] time of decision-making and action is upon us. Otherwise, what on God's earth are we doing here, Madam Deputy Speaker?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I just gave you five solutions. I just gave you five—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I would love to answer that. I would love to. I have got five solutions. I just said them. I am happy to say them again, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: That's . . . You still have time left.

Mr. Jarion Richardson: Sure, I will speak to—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I will speak to—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Jarion Richardson: I will speak to . . .

The solutions are to

1. expedite the introduction of the speed cameras;
2. remove the publication of drunk stops, publicising drunk checkpoints;
3. remove the ticketing system that requires a lengthy summoning process to be got to court for the police service;
4. improve the court processing (again, another matter so that people can elect once having a ticket [to] simply to pay the fine, thereby reducing time on task and all the bureaucracy around that);
5. finish the coroner consultation as a matter of expediency so that we start learning the information that what is actually causing these fatalities; and the last one is
6. update all of the police statistics so we know what decisions are being made and what information is being used for that.

That is six solutions, Madam Deputy Speaker. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 11. Member, you have the floor.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECH

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, I cannot really fault the Member who just sat down because we all, none of us want to see our people dying on the roads, but to try to say the Government can solve it is not totally correct.

But anyway, moving on, Madam Deputy Speaker, I missed out condolences. So, I want to just give some condolences, please, if possible.

Mr. Elroy Eve—

The Deputy Speaker: It is motion to adjourn, and you can address any matter as long as you are not reflecting on a debate.

Mr. Christopher Famous: No, no, [I am] not reflecting on any debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Heh, heh, heh.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Elroy Eve of Green Acres [Road], Devonshire. Ms. Janice Wright of . . . She lived in St. David's, but she is originally from Devonshire.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. [I] associate with Ms. Janice Wright.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: He is not doing condolences so he can—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Ms. Nelda Dyer of Spanish Point. But she was one of these persons during the dark days of 2012 to 2017 who was at every protest. Her grandson mentioned that in the church today. And Mr. Raymond Beach of Devonshire.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: [I will] associate everyone with that.

Also, I want to give birthday greetings to a friend of mine who aggrieved me by not telling me they had a birthday. Honourable Member from [constituency] 30 had a birthday a couple of days ago.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry. C . . . Was it? [Constituency] 30. Yes. So, you all can associate yourself with birthday greetings to the Honourable Member.

[Desk thumping and inaudible interjections]

Hon. E. David Burt: Hey! Happy birthday!

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, often you hear something that you never heard before, and you say, *What does that mean? I never heard that word before.*

The Deputy Speaker: Which word is that?

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Oh, I forgot one thing. I want to congratulate my colleague over here for Arsenal finally winning the Cup and him finally becoming a father.

[Inaudible interjections]

GOVERNMENT HOUSING INITIATIVES UPDATE

Mr. Christopher Famous: So earlier today, I heard a word I heard on this side. Then I heard this side repeat it, so, I said, *Okay, it must be a real word because if they are both saying it, [it] must be a word.*

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Sounded like it.

Mr. Christopher Famous: And I was wondering how to spell it because, you know, phonics and Ebonics, you know, something sounds, you know . . . Black people, they say things how they sound it, but that is not how it is spelled. Right? So, I said, let me look up that word. And the word was *contrarian*.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: First, I thought it was *c*, then it was *c-o-n-t*. Right? And then I had to look up the definition of *contrarian*. It is a noun. Contrarian (or contrarians, plural), a person who likes or tends to express contradictory viewpoints, especially from one held by a majority of people, usually because of non-conformity or spite—contrarians. So earlier today, we heard a lot of contrarian comments, right? So, I just want to address a few things. I do not know if this is reflecting on the debate, but I am speaking as, on behalf—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, talk to the Chair, don't . . . don't talk to him.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am speaking on behalf . . . as my . . . wearing my hat as the BHC [Bermuda Housing Corporation] chair, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Four years ago, the then Honourable Campbell, Member Campbell, became the Tourism Minister. There was a void left at BHC, and I became the chair. So, I have seen a lot of stuff over the last few years, most of all by seeing the list of Bermudians wanting, needing houses growing and growing.

So, we have put . . . Over the years, we have put a lot of things in train. We have looked at different methodologies of how to build houses, height, different places. You know, we have to think outside the box because to house a few thousand Bermudians, we cannot do it the same old way. So last year, when the Ministry of Housing [and Municipalities] was formed, a task group was put together comprising BHC, BLMC and the Ministry of Housing [and Municipalities], and some other ministries, the Ministry of [Youth, Social Development and] Seniors, [for] example. Right? So, for every Friday, we have met and gone over plans. We have researched things. We have been out to different vendors. And over the last few months, we finalised our plans, and in tandem, the Ministry of Housing [and Municipalities] has put together an affordable housing strategy.

So, I say that to say that earlier today, the Honourable Minister Zane De Silva made somewhat of an announcement, and I was expecting a lot of robust

questions on the technical parts of that announcement. That did not come about, but we [will] get to that in a minute.

Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, what I want to say to the people of Bermuda is that when persons say, *Oh, finally you are taking our advice*, I think that is a reach, because as I said, for four years I have been there. So, I know what we have gone through and how we have evolved. So, it smacks of sort of political opportunism for someone, anyone, to try to say, when we are doing something, *Oh, they are finally taking our advice*. Some things just make common sense. They are not saying that their advice was wrong. But to say that we are only doing it because of them, it is incorrect.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Especially when they had done nothing for five years.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: You all did nothing, so please be quiet.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Contrarians, once again.

The Deputy Speaker: Please.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: New word, huh?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, we have reached out to multiple vendors across the world, and we narrowed it down for the first two phases. We have narrowed it down to one vendor from Virginia [and] one vendor from Barbados. And within the next 18 months, because earlier [the] question was asked . . . *When will it be completed?* Well, we have these things called planning rules. [Does] anyone know about that?

Planning rules—we have to comply with planning rules. We do not get any breaks because we are Government. We have to comply with planning rules. We have to comply with health rules. We have to comply with fire and safety rules. Most of all, we have to comply with logic. We have to ensure that the ground that we are going to be building these on can sustain the weight if we have to put down piles. So, there is a phase that we are going to be going through. And when we start clearing ground, there will be people saying, *Why are you cutting on the Mexican Pepper trees?* [It is] because we want to house our people, Madam Deputy Speaker.

So roughly about \$120 million will be spent, guaranteed by the Government, loaned by local banks. And we will create over 200 units, some in your constituency that will house seniors, some in Southampton,

some way up in Dockyard. We are spreading it out. We are not concentrating it all in one area. But that is just the first phase.

In order to satisfy what we need for a growing population . . . Right? We have to grow our population, but we cannot do it without adequate housing. We are going to need to build more and spend more. And we can . . . when we bring these things to the House, it will be interesting to see the Opposition come with actual technical questions rather than little, small, little nitpicking sort of questions.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Right? Madam Deputy Speaker, I am wearing my BHC chair hat one more time here.

BHC has a staff of over 50 people, and they hire local contractors to do building renovations and maintenance. So, when I heard today someone attempt to make the claim that we do not have a proper maintenance programme, I am very aggrieved that someone would take that sort of tone to fellow Bermudians who are out there every day. That you get a call, *oh, this [broke] down*. Every week, every month, we get property maintenance reports. We spend hundreds, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on maintenance of BHC properties. So, I would implore those. Instead of just trying to make up a parliamentary question, ask the questions to the people who actually know.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Is this on?

The Deputy Speaker: It is on right now.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Thank you. Thank you.

[Laughter]

POINT OF ORDER
[Imputing improper motive]

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: The . . . These . . . With the greatest respect to the Member, he is certainly imputing improper motive. My colleague's questions were quite thoughtful and quite properly put to the Minister in question, who unfortunately was not able to answer them nearly as well as this other Member. That perhaps is a question the Cabinet should discuss with that Minister—why he cannot answer the questions.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Continue.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Madam Deputy Speaker, I am going to close with this. Every day that I go on Facebook or I get a call, there are people, our people (right? all of ours—people), dying to buy, to get a house to rent. The private sector someone alluded to, *Will we get subsidies to the private sector so they can build houses?* They are not building affordable houses, so why should we take taxpayer monies to give them to build unaffordable houses. Right? This Government . . . And in the future, if there is a change of Government, they must continue building for these people. When our people are going to be faced with \$2,000 for a studio apartment, that is what the going rate is right now, Madam Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: So, I would . . . I would implore persons that . . . Yes, you want to score political points, but let's not do it with a subject that is very hurtful to people's [lives] because when we have to sit there and listen to the fact that we are, as a group, doing what we can to provide housing, and then we are going to hear these nitpicking sort of questions, almost accusatory, it is not . . . it is not good. So, I would implore this Government and maybe [the] future Government to just keep that in focus. Housing is as crucial as the topic that the other person spoke about, people dying on the roads.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 31.

**CANINE ADVISORY COMMITTEE, RELEASE OF
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Ms. Linda Smith: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This weekend, or this week, there was a very unfortunate situation that happened at Penhurst Park with a woman walking three dogs. She was carrying one, walking two, and the dogs were attacked by loose German shepherds who then moved through the area and kind of traumatised other people as well. They have now been taken into custody, the dogs. These things, you know, they do happen, but every time they do, I think we have to, you know . . . Thank goodness that the situation is not worse than it already is.

But it has been over a year and a half, maybe close to two, since the Bermuda Canine Advisory Committee had finished, apparently, its report to update the regulations. And it was a year ago that my colleague, MP Robin Tucker, asked what the outcome of that had been. And at the time, we were told that it was being reviewed. We were also told that the Government had

put into place, or the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources had put into place an online dog register programme, which they hoped was going to bring forth more registrations. But that does not solve the problem.

The problem actually really needs to have a complete review of where we are with respect to enforcement; dog laws; compensation for people who get hurt; the definition of *prohibited breeds*, *restricted breeds*; fees; fines; and just basically the whole regulation. I know it is a difficult situation, but before somebody gets killed, it is really important that we get on top of that. And we would just like to see the discussion come forward. We would like to see the recommendations that the Canine Advisory Committee has put forward. And we would like to see just some priority given to this before somebody does get seriously hurt.

I know in my constituency, I hear from my constituents about concerns that they have about dogs roaming around the neighbourhood. Some, they say, are prohibited breeds and that nothing is being done about that. I do not know whether the relevance of that or not . . . But certainly . . .

And then my other question is, in the budget explanatory statements, it basically said that 25 per cent of the dogs are licenced, and that is about 25 per cent. So, 2,600 dogs is 25 per cent of the dogs that are registered, which means 75 per cent are not. But my question is, How do we know how many dogs are not registered if they are not registered and we do not have any data attached to them?

So, I think it is an important problem and an important issue. And I think the public deserves to see things come forward that will help protect them and a better understanding of what the situation is. What is going to be prohibited? What is going to be restricted? What does that mean? And when there are accidents like this or tragedies like this . . .

And [I] do recognise that when people see something like this or experience something like this on a walk in the park, it takes them many, many years, if ever, to get over [it]. It is a very traumatic situation. So, whatever we can do to help resolve that, I think we certainly need to get some better definition and really make looking at the recommendations and considering them a priority.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 30. Member, you have the floor.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. I appreciate that.

And thank you to the Member for the birthday wishes. They are well-received.

Today, I rise on a very serious topic to me. And I want to preface my comments by saying . . . Because I know we have some educators in the room and I would like to thank the educators and former educators for their contribution to our society.

I would not be standing here in this Honourable House had it not been for the intervention of teachers in my life. I had to face the sting of being suspended. I had to face a lot of disciplinary actions in order to get me on the right track. Working—

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Yes.

Working with my mother and my family members, the teachers intervened in my life, and I was able to take a different path.

So, it is very disheartening for me to see that Bermuda Union of Teachers has expressed its lack of support for teachers and how they feel when conducting their duties and teaching and educating the future of our Island.

My big concern is that there has been a lack of discussion in this Honourable House when it comes to reassuring parents, when it comes to reassuring teachers and the public, that what has been printed is being remedied and giving constant updates on the situation that has developed within teaching.

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: So, point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: The Honourable Member, perhaps inadvertently, is misleading the House. The reason why this cannot be discussed in depth is because of privacy matters relating to a child and HR matters relating to the situation. So, these are matters that are being dealt with within the relevant areas. And that is why there has not been discussion about that.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

And let me just caution when it does come to HR matters and . . . like under disciplinary action; that is not for public debate. And it is not necessarily something that should come before our Chambers for consideration. That is certainly dealing with people in their private capacity, and so we need to be careful. And I understand the dismay that you may feel, but we have to be very cautious when talking about issues like that.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. And that is why I made sure not to reference any specific situation. I kept it to the comments made by the Bermuda Union of Teachers. And I am speaking in support of educators, not specifically towards any specific thing that may be still under investigation. But I appreciate the Member's intervention. It is good to keep make sure that we adhere to privacy.

We discussed in this Chamber, you know, housing and road fatalities and all manner of things that are plaguing Bermudians. And one of the main things that continues to come up on the doorstep is that everybody says, *Nobody cares. There is no respect. There is no this. There is no that.* And we continue to . . . I continue to hear that as I canvass, that people just do not care.

You know, when we talk about road fatalities, when we talk about crime, there is a lack of respect for consequences. And that is why I agree that obviously you cannot legislate your way out of poor behaviour. But what I will say is that we cannot as leaders send the wrong message to the community that we do not respect consequences, that we do not respect discipline when handed down by folks on the ground. And this is a general take of what we are apparently . . . well, teachers are experiencing, from their point of view. I am not going to say whether or not the . . . whatever investigation . . . or whatever is happening with a certain case. But from their point of view, they are coming to the community and asking for support. They are coming to the community and saying that their disciplinary abilities are being impeded, that there is a broad response across our education system to this particular issue.

And so, I rise today because had it not been for a teacher taking the time out to see something in me, I would not be standing here. And so, I feel I must pay that back and stand up and lend my support to teachers and what they deal with on the front line. They are having to be counsellors. They are having to be parents. They are having to be all manner of things before even getting to teaching and educating our children. And as a parent, that is concerning.

It concerns me that we may have a system where teachers do not feel comfortable to discipline children, that do not feel comfortable to conduct their daily duties with fear of an override or fear of something coming down from above them. And [there is] even mention [of] people and parents and students going around the principals and teachers to the Ministry. And I feel that this is totally unacceptable. It is just not how it should be done.

You must empower the folks who are on the ground dealing with the children 24-7 and dealing with the students 24-7. If not, what you run the risk of is removing the fear of consequence. I think most in this Chamber come from a generation where consequences were dealt out a lot more harshly and a lot more frequently than they are today. So—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: I just want to caution us because I do not want to get emotional, but it is such a difference that can be made in a student's life when they experience well-placed discipline and consequences for their actions. There can be [monumental] change in a person's trajectory when they begin to care about oneself, their future, and believe that there are prospects for them in the future. We cannot rob students of that lesson, that life and your actions come with consequences.

We cannot allow what we already see where folks get behind the wheel and do not have a lot of regard for what consequences may happen by drinking and driving or the fact that we have people able to pick up weapons and harm one another who they could not be related to on such a small island because of lack of fear of consequence and the feeling of having very little prospect within their future and care for oneself. And that starts at a young age.

So, why I am rising here today is to call on a universal rule to be followed that regardless—take the One Bermuda Alliance out of it, take the PLP out of it—a universal rule that must be followed is that we must support our teachers. We must support the early intervention of our students.

And this is not to say that teachers do not deserve scrutiny, and that teachers do not deserve to also be held accountable to whatever job they are providing. But at the end of the day, this is our future. These students are going to be the next us. They are going to take over leadership. We cannot allow our society to shy away from correcting poor behaviour or giving people consequences for doing something that is wrong. We cannot give people a way out to get around suffering for the things that they have done because that defies a fundamental truth of life. When you go into the workplace, when you enter the public domain, you must have understanding that your actions can have consequences.

And so, I understand that it is a very touchy issue and I do not want to cast aspersions one way or the other. But it is undeniable that our teachers, our students and parents are feeling very shaken by the fallout of what is happening throughout our system, where we are having potential demonstrations and various things.

So I just want to please call upon the Government and the Opposition (I will not even make it partisan) that we all try our best to ensure that we support discipline, rule of law and consequences for action, and that we stand up and say that we support teachers, and that they have our support to do their job to the best of their ability. But also allow them to know that should they need to be held to account, yes, we will do that too. Because consequences go both ways. But in this situation, we cannot, as a developed country, have our union speaking into the press, saying they are not being heard, saying that they are not being listened to,

that they are not being supported, and expect to just go about our day, with silence from that particular Minister. And so—

The Deputy Speaker: So, so here, we are not going to make things personal.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: No.

The Deputy Speaker: Because there are rules and regulations that govern how things get done, and legal measures that must be considered in the carrying out of our duties. And so, I would just say, when you say *with that particular Minister*, now you are personalising everything and I am not going to accept that. Especially when even Ministers (and some of your colleagues can tell you) have rules and regulations that they must abide, as well.

Mr. Dwayne Robinson: Thank you, [Madam] Deputy Speaker. And I will retract that. I will take leave of your ruling there.

So, I will finish with this. I could have been in a totally different situation. I could have been a totally different person, you know. I had anger issues, and things that I was dealing with, that teachers took the time to work with me on. They took the time to work through those things with me. And I am honoured to have had those levels of educators in my life, who were supported by my mother when I needed to be disciplined. And it was carried out in a way that changed my life.

And I want that for all students, because sometimes love can be tough, and sometimes you need tough love, right? And it is not always about being sweet. Sometimes I have to draw a line with you, draw a boundary with you. And so, I support our teachers. I hope that the situation within our education system is remedied and tackled and that they feel supported in doing their daily duties.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: You're welcome.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 33. Member, you have the floor.

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I am not going to spend much time on this because it is a very, very difficult issue. But I think one thing I think we must reinforce: under the Education Act there are rules governing the operation of the Minister, and particularly of being holding those below accountable. So, on the one hand, you cannot say, *discipline, discipline, discipline*. On the other hand, you cannot say there must be oversight. And I understand what the

Member was trying to do. But this is a difficult situation. It is a difficult situation to thread the needle on, because it involves a child and an HR matter. And so, until that matter is resolved, we all will have to reserve judgment to a certain extent.

And I do think that, you know, in all relationships with all our unions, we are a labour party. My grandfather was a president of Bermuda Union of Teachers. So, the connection with labour, however it strains, it must be strengthened, restored and the lines of communication is done. So, there is no argument there.

ELEVATING PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE TO FOCUS ON ATTACKING THE PROBLEMS, RATHER THAN ATTACKING EACH OTHER

Mr. Jamahl S. Simmons: But I did not rise, specifically, to speak on that, but I want to speak a little bit about how the Westminster system is, and our way we choose to perform within it is hindering our progress.

Because the nature of the Westminster system is, us versus them. For those of us who served in the previous Chamber, some of the grey hairs here, the distance between the Government and Opposition is the measurement of two swords. You are placed in confrontation with each other, to face each other. The nature of the Westminster system encourages Oppositions—past, present and, perhaps, future—to hope for Government failures, to spring on Government failures, to exploit Government failures. And it necessitates the attacking of people instead of attacking of problems.

And so, we have an environment where the problems become murky because of the nature of the way that we have been taught by our colonisers to approach these problems. And so, I know we are going to be talking about constitutional reform at some point, and I will not anticipate that discussion or debate. But part of it definitely should be looking at how we can Bermudianise our structure, to minimise the cultural conflicts that are inherent in the one we have inherited from our colonisers. And I have witnessed it on many, many occasions, where issues that should be united, and we should be trying to tackle the root causes of, become points of exploitation. And I will not point fingers at anybody in particular. We have all who have served in Opposition know what we mean.

But there is a new wave and a new thought across the world, that the old ways of doing politics are not working. You are seeing Oppositions around the world being rejected for not being able to present themselves as better than those they seek to replace. And so there comes a point where we have to actually know—and, you know, and let us be clear, this culture of conflict does not just stop here. It continues on to the community. Because we all know the listenership goes up when we are fighting. We know that if one of us goes up here and throws a better stick about, you walk around a community, people are like, Yes, *hit 'em, keep*

hitting 'em. And we, when it comes to education, when it comes to shooting, when it comes to deaths on our road, when it comes to all of these issues, housing, we are still locked into attacking the people, the personalities, the organisations. We are not attacking the problem.

And I am not one of those people who says, *Oh, you know well the way we carry on here, it affects people's behaviour.* I am a son of a politician. I have two sons. And I can assure you, there ain't too many people in this country looking [to] us as an example on how to conduct themselves anyway. But let us be clear. As we go forward, there are people who are a little bit less interested in hearing criticisms for criticism's sake. They are less interested in hearing attack for attack's sake. They are less interested in the abuse of a system that we inherited. And we really should figure out how we can work around it.

So, there are lots of ways we can approach this. But I think that as we approach towards the constitutional reform, I will hope the Members will collectively start looking at this system that we have inherited and bring forward ideas into how we can improve it to make it more collaborative as a culture, because the structure is not. It is not inherent to what we are as a people. And it enables and encourages and promotes unnecessary division, where there should be greater collaboration. And as I said, I have been a Minister, so I know. I have not always collaborated as much as I should have. I have not always listened as much as I should have. But I have also had Members (who no longer in this Chamber, were sent the exit) who we met with and we told them the facts, and they came to Parliament and act like they did not know what we were talking about. We had people who came, and did not read the Bills, and attacked on points that the Bill was not even trying to make.

And so there is no Government, nobody in this Chamber, is immune from criticism, legitimate criticism. None of us should be willing to throw out any good ideas from a good place. But what we must do is elevate the debate, and focus more on attacking the problems, than looking for ways to attack each other.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE DEPUTY SPEAKER

HOUSE VISITOR

The Deputy Speaker: And before I ask if anybody else wishes to speak, it [would be] remiss of me to not recognise Senator Mischa Fubler sitting in the Gallery.

Welcome, Senator.

[Desk thumping]

[Motion to adjourn, continuing]

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 7. Member, you have the floor.

FOUNDATION OF OUR CULTURE—RESPECT

Ms. Robin Tucker: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I want to centre my comments today, I guess, following on from my colleague, MP Robinson. Part of who we are—I mean, we have just come off of the Bermuda Day holiday. We have talked, you know, there has been a lot about culture, and part of our culture and things. And one of the things that, for me, is hugely important to remember is that for people who are my age, 60, and those who are, I guess, not too far behind (or should say forward, a little younger), will have been brought up in a certain culture in Bermuda. There were certain expectations. There was a certain level of respect. There was a respect for elders, for self, for teachers and the like. And somehow, at some point, some of those, some of that respect has dwindled.

So, when we look at—or at least when I look at—some of the things that are happening within our community, and we keep asking, *Well, why are we here? How is this happening? Why are we seeing this type of disrespect? Why are people fighting?* And why the young people in particular (not just young people, I want to add)? But we have lost a lot of respect that we had for each other and for ourselves.

So, what I would like to do with my few minutes is just to take a few minutes to remind ourselves about what is at the foundation of our culture; and that is respect. And, I do not know, I mean, I have had my fair share of being kicked out of classes in high school. And I am sure that there are other people in this room who have. I have also had my fair share of entering rooms as a child, and adults have been in there. And my granny or whoever else would look at me like, there is definitely, you have lost yourself because you have not opened your mouth and said, *good afternoon, good evening, good night, auntie, uncle, mister, missus.* There is something very important about that.

And I want to take this opportunity to remind us of where we have come from, because sometimes I look and I do not recognise where we are. We take on a lot of things from other places, and I think that we discount, in a lot of ways, who we actually are as fundamentally Bermudian. That might seem to be the greetings, and, you know, standing up on the bus when an adult gets on the bus, and all those types of things. Not talking back in the classroom. Seem to be, on the face of it, to some, might be small things, but they feed into the very thing that MP Robinson talked about, and that is accountability. We have to be able to build resilience and restore accountability in our children, and in

ourselves, but it has to start with us. We cannot hold children, and each other, to a standard that we are not prepared to hold ourselves to.

Once upon a time, if we were doing something—because we often use this overused phrase about the village. We used to be a real village. We used to look out for each other. If somebody was doing something, I mean, I have a memory of doing something, and before there were cell phones and all that type of stuff, and Lord knows I am not trying to go back in the day. I am just trying to remind us of the principles that we all would have grown up on. Once upon a time, something, we would have done something, said something, that we ought not to have said, treated somebody in a way we ought not to have. And before there were cell phones, mama, granny, grandpa, whoever knew long before we got home what happened. And we had to give an account for what we did, or go back and apologise, or make it right.

What we need to do in this country, in my opinion, is to remember where we have come from. We have to remember those principles that were instilled in us because, yes, we want to advance. Yes, we want to do things differently. We want to go with the times and whatnot, and that is all good. We have to continue to evolve as people. But what we also have to do is remember the principles that got us here in the first place, because some of those things are timeless. If we maintained accountability with each other, then when our children are going wrong, then it would be a lot easier for us to be able to say, *Johnny, you know your mama would not want you to do that*. And if mama was keeping accountability on Johnny, Johnny would not be disrespectful to Miss Smith, who is just trying to look out for him, so that he is able to grow up in an environment where he is not going to end up doing a whole lot of crazy stuff. Every child that I know tries to do crazy stuff, but the children that I (and me included), who have grown up with those guardrails, we went so far, but we knew that we could not go any further.

I believe, as Bermudians, we are not too far gone. But we will be over that cliff if we do not pull some of these things back now. And we often talk about the accountability, we talk about, we need to legislate (and we do). We talk about, yes, we are going to get the Parental Responsibility Act, which is, you know, when it comes, it is probably going to be, you know, useful. But what we do not talk about is what is happening at home. Nobody wants to talk about that. Because the issue . . . at the core of the issue, for most of the issues that we have, is starting from our houses. And we have to stop acting like it is not. We keep talking . . . we sometimes, we act like it is everybody else. It is the school, it is the teachers, it is the police, it is the this, it is the that, it is the other. No.

Let us start talking about, parents, what are you doing? Guardians, what are you doing? Because some of us are holding anger that we take out on our children, and our children respond, and then we are wondering

what is going on. We see that there are sometimes things that are happening with us. We have our own generational traumas. Every last person in this room, listening in this Island, has had some trauma along the way. We have to talk about it, and face it, and deal with it because our next generations depend on it. We have allowed this mess that is happening right now, and we only have ourselves to hold accountable for it.

So, we are not too far gone. We can fix it if we have an appetite to fix it. But we have to start calling it what it is. This stuff that we are seeing, is happening, it is stemming from our households, and it is stemming from our lack of engagement, and doing, and carrying forward, those very principles that I talked about earlier. We are at a crisis point right now. We are seeing all the things that we all know about. We are seeing murders, we are seeing fights, we are seeing people stealing stuff. How in the world can you, can someone . . . I saw a clip, this was a while ago, of an issue that had happened, and somebody had a fight because, or was fighting to try to keep their chain because somebody wanted to . . . How in the world could you have adults, a grown man, sitting around looking and watching and not saying a word? How, Madam Deputy Speaker? And then, what we will do, is we will go over on the side, we will go to our parties, and our picnics, and all that kind of stuff, and then what we will do is say, *Oh, let me show you the video*. And you were sitting right there and did not even intervene.

I saw the video of the little girl who was on the bus, and she was having a meltdown for whatever reason. Some adult was taunting her, children in the back taunting her and laughing, and adults were on the bus, and nobody had the decency to help that little girl and say something. The bus driver did not say anything (from the clip I saw, I will add that, I did not see—the clip I saw), that adults on that bus did not say a word. That is part of our issue, Madam Deputy Speaker. At one point, we all used to get involved.

I still do. And my husband has told me before, because I do not let no children walk by me and do not open their mouth when they are walking past my house. And he has told me that one of these days one of these children is going to cuss you out. And I am good with that because I will deal with that too. It may not be in that moment, but I will deal with that eventually if they are disrespectful. Because I am not about to . . . I am going to do my part. I do not allow it in my house with my children, my grandchildren, the whole nine. My children grew up with a look . . . and guess what? Today, they are responsible adults, and they are raising responsible children.

So, it happens everywhere, but it will, the bad stuff will continue to happen, Madam Deputy Speaker, if we do not get off our behinds and get involved. If we do not start to say, look, I am going to check me. What am I doing? There are tonnes of resources available. The Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors are doing a lot of work to make things available to

people, but you got to go get it. But first, you got to want it. But you cannot want it, and then keep saying why this is happening, and why that is happening, and you are not even having the courtesy and the care to be able to correct young people when you see them, when you see them going wrong. We have a responsibility.

We talk about culture. That is part of our culture. And it is part of our culture that we cannot afford to lose because, already, Madam Deputy Speaker, I am already turning around, and I am sure that some of you will be looking around too, and saying, *This is not the Bermuda I grew up in*, and it is not. It can be better, but we have to each, individually, do our part to make sure that we can make it better for the future generations. If we are talking about young people taking over, I, honestly, with some of the young people—there are some, let me just qualify, there are some young people who are doing some amazing work, who are doing some amazing things in this country. But it seems as though there is a pocket that is not.

So let us go get them. Let us fix it. We are 22 miles and, arguably, 60,000 people. We are a small town on a world stage. It is no reason why we cannot fix some of these issues that we are dealing with, especially in circumstances where we have already had a model. But we have to take our blinders off and be willing to face ourselves. Let us, it is like taking off all your clothes and standing in the mirror and say, *I love what I see*. If we are talking about how much we love each other, we talk about how, you know, *I have got you*, all this other kind of stuff. If I have got you, I am going to say the things that sometimes is going to be hard for you to understand, hard for you to accept, rather, is what I meant. But I say it because I care about you, and I want you to be able to do better. We have to be able to make our . . . to make some adjustments. Our families, our parents, our guardians, us.

If you have an influence on a child, if you have an influence on an adult, do not support the bad behaviour. And worst of all, do not ignore the bad behaviour. Address it. Address it, speak up, let people know it is inappropriate for you to do this, that, and the other. It is inappropriate for you to see somebody that you know, that has got mental health challenges, and you talk about them and you laugh, and all that kind of crazy stuff. Let us start being the adults in the room. Let us start taking accountability for our households, our families. Some of our families, Madam Deputy Speaker, are sick. Some of us are carrying stuff that we ought not be carrying, but we will continue to carry them unless we get help for it.

So, I will end with this. My prayer, my hope, I am begging people: if, please stop telling me, every time I talk to somebody about something that is happening in the country that is bad, and I hear and I read comments sometimes, and, *Oh, it is sad, it is sad*. Yes, it is sad. But what we are we going to do about it? It is an overused word. We have within our ability to be able to do something about it. So, I pray, I pray, I pray, I pray

and I beg that we start to do something. How do you do? First of all, look in the mirror. Then look at those who are in your circle of influence. Leave your circle of concern outside. Deal with your circle of influence. Who do you have influence on? And then start there.

Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other persons who wish to speak?

I recognise Member from constituency 2. Member, you have the floor.

BERMUDA DAY, CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

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

Madam Deputy Speaker, the Home Affairs Minister came to St. George's recently dressed in red, with good intentions. She was in the west and I did not ask her what colour did she wear there. But I certainly hope it was blue and blue.

An Hon. Member: She was clearly at war.

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I appreciated the fact that she has had town hall meetings to discuss, and cause discussion to take place about CARICOM. I have listened to comments made, and the like. And I think in a more sober way, the conversation needs to continue. It needs to continue for another 200 years, not without us doing things to be closer, like we are going to do, to the Caribbean, but recognising for as long as we have been here, we have been disconnected.

I asked a question of the Minister on this subject, and there was something absent when the Minister came to St. George's. I believe a lot of people are drawing, trying to draw the Government into an intellectual conversation about CARICOM.

I witnessed Bermuda Day, the last few Bermuda days, as one participating in the parade. Unable to see, this year, all of those who participate in the parade, because that sun sort of wore me out a little bit. But I was able to see a Bermuda from a different lens because I was not dancing. I was sitting, observing, acknowledging, appreciating and drinking a little bit of water (and maybe a libation or two) as you paraded through.

I saw Bermuda families. I saw Andersons on Front Street. I saw Andersons from St. George's near the flagpole. One would see Andersons from White Hill, or further along Front Street. One would see Lambs and Foggos up on Court Street. One would see Gilberts across the street. One would see Ascentos sitting in different places on Cedar Avenue. One would see visitors in great numbers, and dispersed, sitting in restaurants. You would see persons enthralled in Bermuda. One

would see Gombey troupes of differing colours, different from what it was in the early 1980s when the Bermuda Day celebration replaced the Easter parade, which had its racial connotations attached to it, and the very staunch and real connections to a colonial bygone era, that in some ways still lingers on.

I say that in the context that, it is easy for us to always see the glass as half empty, but my training in life, and my station in life, and as a coach of people, I have been trained in my profession to appreciate the importance of knowing a glass as half full. And knowing that if you dwell in the land of negativity, it is as contagious as the cold. If you dwell in the land of trying to figure out what is wrong, it will prevent you from growing what needs to be done in doing it right.

I am one who teaches fundamentals. I appreciate that doing things fundamentally means that you need to repeat simple, correct things repeatedly. So, whether or not it be in education, whether or not it be delving in the area of restoration of some of the minds that might be going astray in Bermuda, it is in getting back to some fundamental things. It would be easy for us to keep finding the flavour of the month each week, or every two weeks, when we come and harping on them. But as I went through that parade, I saw what makes me hopeful and what makes me appreciative of Bermuda Day.

I remember Bermuda Day. The Minister had the opportunity of cancelling on Bermuda Day not too long ago. And since my years of being connected to politics, since 1983 when I first ran, and the years of being in Youth Parliament, I would say very confidently that every Minister who would have served, going back to Lenny Swan in the 1970s, going back to all the Ministers, would have made the call and that year Bermuda Day would have been cancelled. But a young Minister? Doing his first, probably, year as a Minister and what he says is the most important holiday for him. I would say that it is probably the second best, because I listened to him the other day talk of how Cleveland's winning is more important to him than anything else, so I know that is more important.

But I say this, tongue-in-cheek, but I say this, that the reason why that holiday is so important to that young Minister: he probably was very light when the decision was made to have a Bermuda Day in the first place. He is a teacher by trade, and a historian, so he would appreciate the reasons why. But he, like another Minister, who I passed along the trail, have families that have sat in the same places every year.

Families. You know the heartbeat of a community, the heartbeat of culture, is families.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: That is the key, common denominator. You know, when someone says, *Who is your people?* I tell them, my grandfather was John

Anderson. They said, *The John Anderson from Hog Bay Level?* I said, *No, the John Anderson from Salt Kettle.*

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Oh yes. Our families occupy Tucker's Town, occupy where the Princess is today, occupy places where folks were displaced. My family! And not too dissimilar from many families. So, when you hear the Minister talk about families who are of Bermuda origin, who are of high economic pedigree, from ages with generational wealth, those families will have found it easy to be in The Bahamas, in Turks and Caicos, in places in the Caribbean, Bermudians would not find it so easy because our mind-set was taught to us to hate each other. If you are really looking for why you got a lot of Black on Black crime, you need to go back to the origins of how, you know, people in Bermuda were taught to look down on our very cousins in Saint Kitts, and in the islands. And you all know it to be true.

I am blessed to have been brought up in a sport like golf, that took me around the world and put me in places like Jamaica. I just want to say happy 80th birthday to Bev Russell, my family in Jamaica, entrepreneurs down there. Had the honour of being with them recently. Our connections are so significant, and they are not so dissimilar to those of my families from the United Kingdom, or my adopted families of the Azores. Because I tell people, I have said this to the Minister responsible for Home Affairs, as well. What we must do in the Caribbean for CARICOM, we must also do with the Azores, for my Azorean cousins.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Those connections I have seen with the Azores flight, and how Bermudians are discovering similarities and opportunities in a land that they do not . . . that they cannot afford. Even persons who own homes in Bermuda, who are land rich and cash poor. We need to explore the opportunities of a kindred spirit. You know, not too long ago, I celebrated the growth I have seen in Freemasonry in Bermuda, with the Peppercorn Ceremony, the cultural connections.

I speak of it because I know it; I have been involved in it. I have been ridiculed for being so, but because so I am low enough to appreciate when I see good things cultivate from times, and people look down on you for standing out. I know what it is like to walk places all alone as a Black man, all alone, one in 150, and not want to be 20th. Aspiring to be number one and done so in the least likely of places. I say that to say this, that as you see the Peppercorn Ceremony become a tourism cultural thing that we can build upon, as I have seen Bermuda Day grow because a Minister loves that part of culture, because he has been brought

up in it. I see growth in our country, and I am encouraging the Opposition today, as one who has been a trained person in Opposition, trained, studied the best Opposition in the world, the PLP.

Yes, I did. So, it is only fitting that I feel very comfortable where I sit. Because I respected L. Frederick Wade. I respected C. Eugene Cox. I respected, and she was my good friend, Dame Lois Browne-Evans. So much so, that as Opposition Leader, I sat in her house when I had a problem with a school, and the way they were treating—just when the Ombudsman's Office just came into being—and she told me a story about when her child went to Mount Saint Agnes, and how they treated her because her godmother was Dr. Barbara Ball. And she said to me, she says, *That situation's not too similar. Let me show you how I had to deal with it. You know, my husband had one of his [children] come up in Catholicism*, like my wife, and the like. So, you know, these things are not too dissimilar.

I am saying that to say that it is easy, as my good friend Maxwell says, you know, *It is easy to tickle them up but sometimes you have to be responsible*. Sometimes, you just have to have the courage enough to tell even your supporters that that does not serve the better interest of this country. Sometimes you have to look at persons who you know, when it comes to their best interest, would make the total opposite decision that they are pushing you towards, based on maybe a dollar and a cent.

An Hon. Member: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I have lived long enough, and lived in Europe . . . and lived in Europe and plied my trade. Been escorted at gunpoint out of Faro Airport back to London, and driven to the Portuguese embassy, as a 22-year-old, to know that Britain was once part of the European Union. And a vote during, that my daughter participated in, took Britain away, and took them right back. I have seen in Britain today where the national party that is growing, rise, is very xenophobic. I would not want that for my country either . . . I would not want that for my country. Not by what I saw in Bermuda Day Parade. I was very proud to be Bermudian.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And let me say this, right? One of the reasons why I keep reminding folk, right, that on the Burrows-Hall side, my families were all Higginbothams. Higginbothams from St. George's. Okay? And they were not Black. My family were Burrows' from Sinky Bay . . . not Sinky Bay. Over the other side of the bay, Jew's Bay, where my Granny had a house on the hill where they compulsorily acquired.

My grandfather was an Anderson from Salt Kettle, John Anderson. Father, Peter Herbert Anderson, the same offspring is sitting right in front of me. They are the Jache Adams and many others. Okay?

My great-grandmother was Harriet "Babes" Ratteray, the granddaughter of Charles Roach Ratteray. The granddaughter was my great grandmother. I am here to say, right, that we need to leverage our natural relationships, especially in family, in order to be able to understand why our families are fighting amongst ourselves.

You think if Britain really cared about us, they would have had a national commission on what is going on, and all this killing of our own people. They are too worried about themselves right now. They cannot get the . . . they cannot decide why not they want to help Ukraine, or what they are going to do in the Middle East. They cannot figure out why they are not with Europe, or how long they are going to stay by themselves. Listen, one thing we have been since the 1600s is able to figure out what is best in the interest of Bermuda. Right? And I feel, having watched that Bermuda Day Parade, loving the fact that the new generation of Bermudians—because we all came from somewhere. The Filipino community, not deterred, the fact that they are going to celebrate their culture, and embrace ours at the same time. And one thing I will say about them, they study the community they are in, and they are respectful towards us. *Mr. Swan, how are you?* and the like.

And we need to (and I know the Minister responsible for Labour encourages this type of thing) educating people that come from overseas about Bermuda and Bermuda's culture. We need to do more of that too, as we repatriate some Bermudians. It has come to the fact now that I know Bermudian students, like my daughter and her friends that went to Saltus and the like, some of them are doctors over in the UK, and she is still working on her designation, taking her exams, her solicitor's exams and the like. They get together and fly kites, and other Bermudians around the world do that. That is part of who we are.

People love Bermuda. As we sell Bermuda, I am encouraging us. I am encouraging us to leverage Bermudians overseas to help sell Bermuda. Take some of that money. None of this necessarily has to go to the telegraph. It evaporates once it is gone in print. You can invest in Bermudians around the world: in Canada, in the United States, in the Caribbean, in the Azores, in England, in Wales, in Scotland, in Ireland, in Italy. Where we have connections with people and do things.

Finally, as I wrap up, let me just say this. I want to commend the Culture Department, the Minister, and also the director for the work that they have done. But as I mentioned on congrats, I want to say thank you to those forefathers, like Ms. Ruth Thomas, that made it possible for us to have people feel it necessary to ride their classical bikes throughout Bermuda. For the day now that the Lorraine [Nursing] Home would put their seniors to make sure that they can see what is going on and enjoy. Project Action for making sure that we took the time to honour someone that no one realised helped us behind the scenes, Ceola Wilson. St. David's Island, those, and native community for being there.

CedarBridge Academy, Mr. Dean Foggo, for what they were able to do with their float. Somebody said to me, says, *Do you think we need to bring back the Easter Parade?* I says, no, we can have a category to encourage more floral fashions. But, you know, maybe we will find some more flowers, but maybe we can encourage some folks to do some more creative things.

But the beautiful part about Bermuda Day was that it galvanised families. You hear people would make fun about somebody putting a tape down to be to be somewhere. You know, [it] beckons to me of why my family always had Cup Match at Cathedral Rocks. There was a time when places where people go to swim was not so restrictive as it is today. As you as you drive, fly in, you will see Bermuda dotted with white roofs. Let us protect the open spaces that we have left, to make sure that all Bermudians and our visitors can enjoy this beautiful Island, and some of its beauty, for decades to come.

But let us not forget how important it is. We will never get back the 200 to 300 years lost, of not being connected with our community. But we can certainly go forward with our Caribbean, Azorean and the rest of the world that connected to Bermuda in a more meaningful way. It is time for this whole country and leadership to get on board with that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak?

I recognise the Member from constituency 25. Member, you have the floor.

INSURANCE, REGULATING LOCAL INSURANCE COMPANIES

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and a pleasant early evening to you.

I have got two topics I want to cover today. The first is insurance. We have recently heard that the local company Allshores is going to receive a \$21 million tax credit paid for from the taxpayers' money. Now, I understand why this has to happen. I understand this complicated situation relating to the OECD, and the CIT, and the ABCs, and the "you know me's." I am not even talking about that. The Government obviously understands that situation.

The Government could have easily foreseen this situation happening—and should have, because it was well foreseen—and put in place mechanisms to make sure the people of Bermuda, who are paying ever-increasing insurance premiums, receive the benefits of those tax credits. In the way that those who pay BELCO bills—because BELCO is going to get a tax credit—will receive the benefits of those tax credits, because of the way the BELCO rates are regulated by the Regulatory Authority. So, I am going to give a free idea here to the Government, which we brought up in our

Reply to the Budget [Statement], is that the local insurers should be regulated.

Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, you know, we in the OBA are not big fans of regulation and red tape, but there are circumstances when it is appropriate. Allshores, big company, market dominance. A major cost for a lot of Bermudians receiving millions of dollars of taxpayer money and, Madam Deputy Speaker, it is common in many jurisdictions that insurers, for personal lives (that means, you know, you and me, paying our house insurance, car insurance, what have you) are regulated. They cannot just change their premiums whenever they feel like it. They have to apply to the regulator, and the regulator will look at it and say, *Is this fair? Is it reasonable? Are all the appropriate things taken into account for?*

So, we are going to give this idea, in a spirit of constructive collaboration, to the Government. And I hope that the Premier and Minister of Finance, I hope that the Minister of Health, and I hope that the Minister for Home Affairs can get their heads together and figure out how to take some action on this. So that this frankly ridiculous situation can be resolved for the people of Bermuda.

So let me put that there. I have talked about that in public, but I want to get that on the record here because it is important. And it may not be simple, but it has to be done.

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019 MISSING ANNUAL REPORTS

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Now, Madam Deputy Speaker, as you know, we recently had a visit from King Charles. I do not remember which one he is, second or third. And I think Bermuda showed itself very well. I think he had a great visit here. He went around, he met a lot of children, artists, sportspersons. I think that was very appropriate. And by all accounts, he was served well by his visit, and so were we. And he came here right after he went to the United States. And by all accounts, that visit went very well for him. And he made what was a well-reported speech to the US Congress there. And if you do not mind, may I quote a few phrases from the speech, Madam Deputy Speaker?

He was referring to the Magna Carta, and he was talking about it, how it is a sort of shared document that underlies the United Kingdom's political and constitutional system, and how many aspects of America, the United States of America system, have also sprung from that well. And indeed, obviously, us here in Bermuda.

So, as he said, the Magna Carta is "the foundation of the principle that executive power is subject to checks and balances." And then he went on to say, "Our common ideals were not only crucial for liberty and equality, they are also the foundation of our shared prosperity. The rule of law: the certainty of stable and

accessible rules, an independent judiciary resolving disputes and delivering impartial justice. These features created the conditions for centuries of unmatched economic growth in our two countries.”

And Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the values of Bermuda as a jurisdiction for business, but also for people to come and visit, is in fact things like our rule of law, the safety, people can feel confident that they understand how things will go, things like that. So, I want to keep talking about the rule of law. We had today tabled by the Premier, the 2025, . . . 2024, . . . 2025/26 Premier staff reports. I am not even going say I am grateful to him, because it is required by law, so he produced them. And we were discussing the supplementals, and one of the things that came up is—

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: The Premier and Minister of Finance does not produce these reports. These reports are produced by the public service. I table them as a representative. I know the Honourable Member wants to personalise things, but I would be grateful if you could advise him, Madam Deputy Speaker, around those things.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Madam Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Do you accept that as—

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: No, in fact, Madam Deputy Speaker, I do not accept that because the legislation states the Premier shall table. That is his responsibility.

The Deputy Speaker: That was not my comment.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Oh.

The Deputy Speaker: That who produces them, the civil service produces them for tabling.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes, the Premier shall table them.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Now, I like to think Madam Deputy Speaker, if I was the Minister, if I was the Minister and I was required by law to produce something, I would make sure all the relevant things I, as a Minister, was accountable for—by law, to this Parliament and the people of Bermuda—would be done. And if they were not done, I certainly would not pass the buck, Madam

Deputy Speaker. I cannot speak for others, but I know how I would behave with accountability, and I know what the people of Bermuda expect from accountability from their leaders.

Now, we also talked about the supplementals today. And we understood, you know, sometimes things happen, things come late, and we appreciate the civil service is busy, the Premier is busy, Minister so-and-so is busy. Sometimes things get missed. Now, it came to my attention in December that we were missing these reports, required by law for the Premier to table, as stated by the legislation. And I said, you know, let me do the respectful, collegial thing. And I sent him an email, private, personal email. *Hey, Premier, so-and-so, so forth. Hey, look forward to you producing these in due time.* Okay? December.

And you know, we have a little more back and forth. And then, as you know, right before we broke for the spring, we had the last two, but one, were produced, and then we had today's. So here we are, June 1 on Monday. Premier was notified of, let us call it (perhaps, must be) an oversight, back in December. And we do not have reports for three years in the middle.

And again, like I said, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate things can fall through the cracks. But in April I emailed the Premier to assist him with his memory. I know he is very busy. And as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, one of the things that we hold for here, on the One Bermuda Alliance, is, perhaps, the role of Minister of Finance and the role of Premier should be separated. Because they are big jobs, and they need the full dedication so that things do not fall through the cracks.

Now, if you do not mind, I might like to quote from my email, with your leave, and the Premier's response.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Yes.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Yes.

Shadow Minister, we will endeavour to table the current report by May. I will give no commitment on old reports and the resources required to produce those matters are, in my judgment, better used to advance Throne Speech initiatives, et cetera.

Now, let me ask you, Madam Deputy Speaker, rhetorically, of course.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, because I would not answer.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: Would you require a commitment, or non-commitment, for someone to execute his duties as laid out by the law of the land? No.

Would you imagine that the leader of the country or a Minister or any Government official would exercise discretion as to which laws they might or might not follow, especially when respectfully reminded and

given ample time to rectify (no doubt) inadvertent mistakes?

I remind this House that the Government wanted to pass a law to criminalise doctors for failing to submit data returns on time. Right? Now, obviously, that did not pass because that was ridiculous. And this House did pass a law to provide penalties, criminal penalties, for people in very stressful situations, who go up into Financial Assistance and have human behaviour. Right? Because no one goes up to Financial Assistance because things are going really well for them.

So, what are the penalties when a senior government official blatantly chooses not to follow the law?

And I would tell you, what do you think the person on the street who is being asked to pay their social insurance on time, to pay their traffic fines, who tries to put up a three-foot fence and has to take it down because they do not have the Planning permission? So, what kind of example is this? And we heard a lot today from some other people in this House about examples in leadership and accountability. And frankly, I am very disappointed. And I would bet that most people would not think that the Government could exercise discretion, willy-nilly as to what laws.

Now, we could have a discussion about, is it reasonable for those reports to happen? That is a different discussion. And if the Government wants to change that law, we could have that discussion. But they have not. You cannot just pick and choose. Right? That is what we talk about when we talk about accountability.

And frankly, I put it on the Government frontbench, and the backbench, to ask yourself, because, you know, frankly, their leader currently is a lame duck.

An Hon. Member: Ooh.

Dr. Douglas DeCouto: So that . . . that is a fact. That is what you call a leader who is on the way out. Does not make you a bad person. It is just a reflection of the reality of the situation. And so, I would ask the people on the Government benches, as they look to whoever their next leader might be, is this how you want to go? Do you want to pick and choose which laws you choose to abide or not abide?

I had a senior Member of Government say to [me], *DeCouto, why do you care so much? Some of that information is already in the public domain.* I said, *Surely, so-and-so, you are not implying that the Government does not need to follow the law.* Because I am sure that is not what they realised they were saying. Right? And why do I care? A lot of people care. They want to know who is getting paid by the Government. Who are the Ministers hiring? What are they doing? That is why this Government passed that law, that it has not even followed.

So, I would say to this Government, do your job. Follow the laws. If they are not working, we can

have that discussion. But you do not get to pick and choose. That is accountability. And that is setting a good example. So, I look forward to the Premier bringing to this House those three reports that are missing. I appreciate they are a little bit back in time, but perhaps I could cede three of the next seven minutes. He can do a quick whip around with some of his Ministers and say, *Hey, Minister so-and-so, who'd you hire in those three years?* Maybe call Colonel Burch. Maybe he had somebody. Call somebody in the Senate. Maybe they had somebody. I can maybe help him make those calls if he is too busy.

So, with that, Madam Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Are there any other Members who wish to speak? There being no other . . . Oh, I recognise the Premier and Finance Minister.

Hon. E. David Burt: Madam Deputy Speaker, there is been a lot of contributions this evening. And I know that the Deputy Premier did want to speak, but he is not here. So, I wish everyone a wonderful time, and we will see everyone in two weeks.

Good night.

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, okay.

The House is . . . now has already ended. Okay.

[Gavel]

The Deputy Speaker: See you on June the 12th.

An Hon. Member: The 12th.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

[At 6:02 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 12 June 2026.]