



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE SENATE

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A NATIONAL CULTURAL HERITAGE POLICY FOR BERMUDA

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Madam President, the 2020 Throne Speech promised a National Cultural Heritage Policy for Bermuda that would combine the “strands that jointly speak of Bermuda’s uniqueness and shared identity with those peoples from whom we are descended. One history, many cultures, a shared cultural identity.”

Madam President, today I am pleased to say that the National Cultural Heritage Policy for Bermuda has been completed and the Department of Culture is preparing to launch the policy during Heritage Month in May.

Today I lay the National Cultural Heritage Policy before this honourable chamber, with the hope that we may debate it when Parliament resumes in May.

Madam President, there are two documents before you: the full National Cultural Policy – a detailed 47-page document providing in-depth background, rationale and explanations. And an “In Brief” abridged version that outlines at a high level what the policy intends to achieve. We hope the two documents will cater to varied reading audiences with an interest in the policy.

Madam President, there are six primary goals of the policy, namely:

- To promote culture and develop our creatives;
- To preserve and protect our cultural heritage;
- To include culture in our national development plans;
- To establish cultural connections;
- To assist with cultural administration; and
- To implement and review the policy.

Madam President, this Government is committed to promoting culture and developing our creatives. Accordingly, the policy speaks to the need to support, maintain and develop our cultural institutions. In addition, we will create programmes and initiatives to assist the growth and employment of our artists and tradition-bearers.

Some of the action points associated with this goal include developing annual programmes and events such as competitions to encourage the production of new artistic materials; and supporting the establishment of arts-related councils such as a film board.

Madame President, the goal of preserving and protecting our cultural heritage speaks to the value of our sense of identity and our tangible cultural assets such as our archaeological wealth and archival records.

Part of our goal here is also to highlight the importance of our oral traditions, histories, and traditional knowledge. Some of the action items outlined to bring this goal to fruition include providing training opportunities to young Bermudians in the

fields of culture, heritage and the arts; work with education to have students develop projects on community heroes; and educate the public on the importance of identified days of national significance.

Madam President, in order for our community to experience our culture as a robust and vibrant force, it is essential for it to be thoughtfully linked to all aspects of national development.

Practically speaking, this involves considering how our culture, how our national identity, impacts the directions we choose as we shape our national development strategies. This also requires developing and strengthening synergies between Government, the third sector, creatives and tradition-bearers.

This kind of holistic, integrated approach would affect our approach to our children's education, our environment, our approach to tourism marketing, and how we integrate technology into our systems. Some of the ways this will be accomplished is by creating a catalogue of cultural materials that can be disseminated to every teacher; publish an annual

newsletter providing the community with cultural updates; and establish digital links with cultural industry partners.

Madam President, despite Bermuda's geographic isolation, we have always as a people recognised the importance of fostering cultural connections. Within the contemporary context of this National Cultural Heritage Policy, the connections we wish to emphasise speak to our past, present, and future.

This includes the importance of the "core" cultures from which Bermudian identity developed: West and Central African, British, Portuguese/Azorean, indigenous American, and American; as well as the historical, geographical, cultural and economic linkages and affinities that exist between Bermuda and the Caribbean and other small island nations.

Some of the ways that this will be accomplished will be by creating public awareness campaigns on the contributions Bermudians have made at the international level; researching and establishing relationships with cultural industry partners in the Caribbean; and by including cultural manifestations of the core cultures in our national celebrations.

Madam President, the remaining two goals of the National Cultural Heritage Policy involve assisting with cultural administration, implementing the goals of the policy, and conducting a regular review of the policy with our stakeholders to ensure that the goals and action points of the policy remain relevant and beneficial.

This will include encouraging appropriate cultural legislation and regulation; inspiring the cultural heritage community to review, revise, and recommit to the goals of the policy on an annual basis at a meeting organised by the Department of Culture during Heritage Month. These initiatives are designed to ensure both the short-term and long-term viability of these principles.

Madam President, the overarching goal of the policy is to inspire national pride and to support the deepening of our shared identity. The policy also aims to ensure that Bermudian culture is embedded in every level of everyday life.

Although the Department of Culture is responsible for drafting the National Cultural Heritage Policy, the policy belongs to the whole of Bermuda: to our creative communities, our heritage institutions, our artists, our tradition-bearers, our students and our citizenry as a whole.

So, **Madam President**, although the Department of Culture will obviously enact some of the programming suggested in the policy, the Department's most important role is to be the steward for this policy.

The Department's role as steward will begin with the launch in May during the Department's virtual cultural conference, which will utilise the policy itself as a framework for discussing some of the challenges and opportunities emerging from the culture and heritage sectors.

Madam President, it is our intention to have the National Cultural Heritage Policy exist as an evolving blueprint for the integration of culture into all aspects of Bermudian life. As we implement aspects of this policy, the Department of Culture will work with our stakeholders to better understand the needs

of our tradition-bearers and creatives and develop a plan to accomplish the policy goals; and we will put these strategies into action. We will base all of our work on the principles of respect, collaboration, accountability, and an appreciation for what we share as one community.

Madam President, I have said it before and I think it's worth repeating: Our culture is the nation's soul. It's not just our dress or dance or song. Nor our history or customs alone. Our culture is the summation of all we are as a people. It is the sum effect of all of these things, which give us pride in who we are and help us rise together to whatever challenges are put before us – be it an international sporting event, a hurricane, social justice, economic trials or fighting a pandemic. National pride in our shared culture unites and strengthens us.

For this reason, **Madam President,** this policy is such an important milestone for the Government. With it, we seek to promote our interwoven histories and common causes; and promote Bermudians' shared cultural identity.

I table this National Heritage Cultural Policy today, and look forward to debating in this honourable chamber it when Parliament resumes in May.

Thank you, **Madam President**.