



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

By

The Hon. E. David Burt, JP, MP

Premier of Bermuda

BERMUDA FIRST UPDATE

28th February 2020

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise this Honourable House of the progress being made on the implementation of the recommendations from Bermuda First.

Mr. Speaker, this Government committed to building a better and fairer Bermuda for all by enacting policies to grow Bermuda's economy in a balanced manner. One of the pledges in our election platform was to re-establish the Bermuda First advisory group consisting of local and international business and community leaders to develop a long-term economic and social plan for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda First completed Phase II of its National Socio-Economic Plan and submitted a "Future State Report" dated August 23rd 2019 which provided 129 different recommendations for achieving a healthier future state of our island. Bermuda First referred to the report as a call to action on who and what we want to be as a country.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda has operated at a high standard in the international arena through its accomplishments on sound regulation and compliance. Notwithstanding the many accomplishments Bermuda has made internationally it is agreed that national transformative change is critical.

Mr. Speaker, we must all agree a National Socio-Economic Plan that shifts mindsets and behaviours and offers every Bermudian the opportunity and tools to participate equitably in our sustainable, growing economy, to positively impact the quality of life of Bermuda's residents. Further, **Mr. Speaker**, As I have previously stated, the Bermuda First leadership believes, as does the Government of Bermuda that, "For our island to be successful we must have a single vision and we must all move in the same direction." The Bermuda First report provides some helpful recommendations to move us in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable members will recall that the Bermuda First report identified three critical areas for detailed analysis and reform: healthcare, education and immigration. In addition to these three critical areas there were recommendations on how to ensure that Bermuda becomes a leading jurisdiction for technology companies. To provide an update to this Honourable House and the public, I can advise that recommendations in these areas are being progressed.

Mr. Speaker, the Bermuda First Report contained 35 recommendations under the ambit of the Ministry of Health and of those, Mr. Speaker, 23 or 66% of those recommendations were either in progress by the Ministry of Health or are fully supported and will be actioned in the near future.

Mr. Speaker, healthcare financing reform is actively underway and forms a significant portion of the work of Ministry of Health. In line with the recommendations, the Standard Health Benefit (SHB) is currently being redesigned to modernize the current reimbursement scheme. Also as part of the health financing reform Government is in the process of regulating fees to health care providers as recommended by Bermuda First.

Mr. Speaker, education rightly features prominently in the Report's recommendations. In line with Bermuda First's recommendation that all principals be certified and in keeping with Plan 2022, the Department of Education has already contracted with the Bermuda College who entered into an articulation agreement with Framingham University for Principal Certification.

Modernisation of public school facilities is included in the Ministry's upcoming plans for school redesign and restructuring

Hospitality education, industry training and community engagement is in progress; students are being introduced to more technical/vocational programme options; and students are being linked with approved industry partners for mentoring, internships and real career experiences.

Mr. Speaker, regarding the use of technology in schools, all educators will be required to be appropriately trained in the use of technology. Bermuda First recommended the incorporation of coding and computing into the core curriculum to promote critical thinking and problem solving.

Mr. Speaker, information technology literacy is being infused into the public school system and coding and robotics classes are now included in the Department of Education's ICT Curriculum offered to P5 and P6 students.

Mr. Speaker, a strategic approach to the reform of the immigration system is in train and its careful execution is critical to the success of Bermuda. A work permit scheme to cater to the unique staffing needs of the international business sector has already been put in place and the overall administrative processes are being streamlined and automated.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members should note that a specific recommendation of Bermuda First, and proposed in the Budget Statement delivered last week in this Honourable House, was the amendment of the existing 60/40 legislation to encourage more foreign investment into Bermuda's economy. Additionally, Honourable Members will recall passing legislation in this Honourable House to encourage development of approved residential schemes within the EEZs. This too accords with the Report's recommendation that marries the economic

substance requirements with the existing capacity to provide greater opportunities in these areas through real estate development.

Mr. Speaker, in keeping with the Bermuda First recommendation to provide affordable, suitable housing for at-risk populations, low and middle-income families, the Bermuda Housing Corporation is moving forward with its plans to develop additional housing units in Southside. This Government is also working with the Salvation Army to upgrade the existing housing shelter on North Street, that will provide long overdue upgrades to the buildings at this site with the \$1 million in funding allocated in the 2020/21 Budget.

Mr. Speaker, to address the Bermuda First recommendations around the use of technology and inviting and incubating talent in this space, the Government is making steady progress on a number of initiatives in line with these recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, specific to IT Governance, the Report recommended:

- (i) The re-engagement of the IT Secretariat Model, and
- (ii) Setting up a reference framework of categories for technology projects with clearly defined levels of oversight, including financial to ensure value for money.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to advise Honourable Members that new IT governance processes have been implemented within Government, which have addressed these recommendations. I commend the Information & Digital Technology Department for advancing these recommendations which, when taken with the additional capital funding to be provided in this coming Budget, will greatly enhance the Government's delivery of e-government services to meet the recommendation to "Position Bermuda as a world leader in Government e-services by 2022".

Mr. Speaker, these are some of the many initiatives linked to the Bermuda First report that are currently being advanced by this Government. Last week in the Budget Statement, the Honourable Minister of Finance announced that an implementation team will be setup to assist in the advancement of some of the recommendations contained in the Bermuda First report. Earlier this week I met with the chair of Bermuda First, Mr. Phillip Butterfield, to discuss further advancement of the recommendations contained in the report and I look forward to updating Honourable members and the public on the progress being made in the future.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.