



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE SENATE

BY SENATOR THE HONOURABLE OWEN K. DARRELL, JP

MINISTER OF TOURISM, CULTURE AND SPORT

“YEAR IN REVIEW”

WEDNESDAY 18th DECEMBER 2024

Madam President, as we approach the end of 2024, I take a moment to reflect on some of the highlights and accomplishments of my Ministry throughout the year.

Madam President, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport is the steward of Bermuda’s cultural heritage and leads in advancing amateur sport and developing policies for tourism. Our job, **Madam President** is to celebrate and preserve our culture and heritage and support programmes for athletes, creatives and local tourism and sporting focused events. We also offer incentives via the Tourism Investment Act to developers of hotels, restaurants and tourism products including attractions.

Madam President, Members will recall just 2 weeks ago, debating two tourism Investment orders; one of which was the first for a tourism-based attraction. **Madam President,** 2024 has seen a total of 6 Tourism Investment Orders passed by the Legislature; 5 for hotels and one for an attraction. These investment orders can provide relief from customs duties, hotel occupancy tax, employer's share of payroll tax and land tax, depending on the type of development. **Madam President** I urge entrepreneurs and developers with a tourism-based product to apply for a tourism investment order.

Madam President, the Ministry manages a fund that assists local entrepreneurs who organize tourism and sporting related events. We have established criteria for use of the fund and applications must adhere to this in order to be approved. Since January we have financially assisted 36 individuals and groups who have curated these types of events to increase interactions between entrepreneurs and tourists. **Madam President,** these events demonstrate and celebrate the diversity and creativity of Bermudians and can draw thousands of people.

Madam President, the Department of Culture has had a very successful year commencing with a vibrant Creatives Live performance by the Tino Martinez Quartet at the Harrington Workman's Club and finishing with caroling through the parishes; the last of which will be held this Saturday, 21st December in St George's Town Square at 5 p.m.

Madam President, one of the highpoints of the year is always the Heritage Month Celebrations which kicked off with the Bermuda Arts Council Awards Ceremony and culminated with the annual Bermuda Day Parade with the theme Culture = Energy. The record-number of vibrant participants created a buzz as spectators filled the streets of Hamilton with excitement. **Madam President,** as always, this parade is about all of us as Bermudians and is one of the best opportunities throughout the year to celebrate ourselves as a people.

Madam President, the launch of the MakerSpace earlier this month at Cedarbridge Academy is the fulfillment of a 2023 Throne Speech initiative to provide a physical space and the resources for our artists, musicians, dancers and performers to practice and perfect their craft without the burden of additional costs.

Madam President, in opening the doors to the Department of Culture’s MakerSpace, we celebrate the creative future of our island. We are investing in our artists, our musicians, our performers, and in doing so, we are investing in the soul of our community. I encourage all creatives, whether established or aspiring, to take full advantage of this resource.

Madam President, the Department of Culture collaborated with talented Bermudian filmmakers to produce works of lasting significance for the community that are widely accessible. These include the ***Gold Bermudians*** documentary series celebrating five exceptional individuals who shaped Bermuda’s history and culture. This second instalment featured National Hero and abolitionist Mary Prince, musicians The Talbot Brothers, archaeologist Dr. Edward Harris, Olympic sprinter Debbie Jones-Hunter, and National Hero, activist, and engineer Dr. Pauulu Kamarakafego, showcasing the talent and resilience that define Bermudian greatness. Additionally, the Department launched the second instalment of their ***Gombey Documentary*** series, entitled, “Gombey Unity” as part of the Gombey Festival weekend celebrations.

Madam President, the Bermuda Arts Council this year, funded and supported by the Department of Culture, was able to support 22 creatives through grants totalling \$83,700. The Bermuda Arts Council also granted 3 student scholarships with a total value of \$20,000. This represents a significant Government investment in the arts and our creatives.

Madam President, the National Heroes Act, 2024 was passed by the Legislature and is in play. This is a fulfilment of a 2022 Throne Speech commitment to formalize the process for the selection of national heroes to safeguard from political interference. To ensure that the honour of a national hero remains an exceptionally rare and special one, it is limited to every ten years. It is my sincere desire that this Act will help us best recognize our most deserving heroes.

Madam President, touching on some of the highlights of the Department of Sport and Recreation, this year's Camp Connect initiative was a big success with over 2700 students taking part in a summer of fun and learning. **Madam President**, for over 50 years the Department has served as a reliable option for parents seeking safe, enjoyable and affordable summer camps for children and this

year was even better. An additional 850 spots were added allowing more children to participate and resulting in a reduction in the waitlist.

Madam President, earlier this year the Ministry through the Department of Sport and Recreation, hosted the 42nd Annual Sports Awards at the Hamilton Princess Hotel. The Awards recognized the distinguished achievements of 35 of the island's top athletes, officials, and supporters for their contribution to sports. The top honours, Athlete of the Year, was awarded to Conor White as Male Athlete of the Year and Jessica Lewis Female Athlete of the Year.

Madam President, the 43rd Annual Sports Awards will be held in March 2025 and nominations are now open until 31st December 2024. Nomination forms are available to the general public and National Sports Governing Bodies and be accessed through the Department's website www.sportsandrec.bm.

Madam President, the National Sports Policy – Sport Matters 2022-2027 serves as a guiding framework for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Sport, with a mission that is both aspirational and

transformative. We are making good progress on the implementation of all five goals which are:

- **Goal 1** Increasing participation
- **Goal 2** Achieving sporting excellence regionally
- **Goal 3** Improving access to sports facilities
- **Goal 4** Increasing the value of sport
- **Goal 5** Establishing a framework for talent development.

Madam President, objective 1.2 under Goal 1 is and I quote, “Develop a grass roots sport and activity programme for children aged 3-6”. **Madam President** I am pleased to say that preparations are well underway for the Active Kids Sports Academy, which is scheduled to launch in January 2025. This program aims to introduce young children to foundational physical activities and encourage lifelong participation in sports.

Madam President, The Ministry funded 25 athletes through the Elite Athlete Sponsorship Initiative and 13 Junior Athletes through the National Junior Athlete Sponsorship Programme. **Madam President** In total \$2.5 million dollars was allocated to National Sports Governing Bodies, Bermuda Sports Anti-Doping Agency, junior and senior athletes.

Madam President, our sports facilities continue to be well used. There are on a monthly average 325 users at the WER Joell Tennis Stadium, 200 users at the Motorsport Park and 500 users at the WMC Preece Softball Park. **Madam President**, our island camping facilities, those being Paget, Darrells and Ports Islands were also well utilized with over 5,700 campers enjoying recreation and the outdoor environment.

In conclusion **Madam President**, let us carry forward the spirit of these programs, nurturing our cultural heritage, fostering our tourism connections, and encouraging and supporting our sports initiatives. May this holiday season be adorned with love, unity, and peace.

Wishing you all a season filled with happiness and abundant blessings. Happy holidays!

Thank you, **Madam President**.