

SPEECH

FROM THE THRONE

on the occasion of the Convening of the Legislature

Delivered by Her Excellency the Governor

Ms. Rena Lalgie

Friday, 8 November 2024

A FAIRER BERMUDA

For all





SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

DELIVERED BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR
MS. RENA LALGIE

8TH NOVEMBER 2024

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; the Government is making steady progress toward building a fairer and more equitable Bermuda. Seniors' pensions have been increased in successive years by the CPI, and payroll tax has been reduced for 86% of Bermuda's workers. Childcare assistance has been expanded so that now families making under \$130,000 can get help paying for childcare. In the last three years the Government has converted to use 71 affordable housing units with 118 more on the way. The Government has also introduced the first ever minimum wage in Bermuda.

The results of the Government's fairness initiatives are paying dividends in times of rising global prices. We are seeing increased numbers of Bermudians working, as the number of jobs is increasing across multiple industries, with record numbers employed in international business. Overall, economic performance is strong and growing, our economy remains resilient. The Government's improving fiscal position has enabled the provision of relief to the residents of Bermuda. The high cost of healthcare has been mitigated by the third successive year of a freeze on Government's portion of the standard health benefit, and the impact of global increases in the cost of fuel have been staved off by local, Government-led action. On the heels of the first expected budget surplus in 21 years, better than expected fiscal performance has allowed the Government to reduce energy taxes by 60%, while deploying an unprecedented \$25m social and infrastructure package to broaden the reach of the Island's economic success into social transformation. Bermuda has devised a corporate income tax regime that has cemented confidence in our pragmatic and collaborative approach to the invaluable partnership with international business. This approach is business friendly and will make Bermuda's tax system fairer by allowing the Government to reduce or eliminate taxes that increase the cost of living.

An historic hotel redevelopment has been secured through direct Government-led negotiations which is already manifesting a positive economic impact. The Fairmont Southampton transaction represents Bermuda's largest hotel project and signals the renaissance of our tourism in defiance of considerable opposition to the redevelopment plans for this iconic emblem of the second pillar of this economy. This hotel project represents jobs and opportunities for Bermudians.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; in the wake of a resounding mandate from the people of Bermuda, who four years ago braved the unknown to express their preference for representation in a general election that featured mask wearing and social distancing, the Government has toiled every day in the last four years to discharge the covenant made between those who exercised that right and those of us who humbly accepted their challenge to serve them.

The post-pandemic world of 2024 is one riven by wars, civil unrest, political angst, stubborn and systemic inequality, and an endless wave of misinformation transmitted at alarming speeds through all manner of media. In observing these global trends, it can call to mind the words of Nelson Mandela, who remarked:

*“After climbing a great hill,
one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.”*

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; though Bermuda has surmounted significant challenges, the Government recognises that there are many more obstacles ahead—there is much more work to do to ensure that economic progress is felt by all Bermudians. In this legislative Session, that work will renew the focus on the social transformation spurred by September’s Mid-Year Review and consolidate the fiscal successes that led to the historic expected budget surplus. The Government’s mid-year review and the allocation of additional resources to hire staff, cement necessary programmes, and expand services to the people, prioritises the paths of economic growth, social renewal, and fairness.

In his call for an economic bill of rights, Aaron Crichlow, co-founder of Bermuda is Love, profoundly stated:

“Bermuda is more than an idyllic paradise. It is more than its beaches, more than its financial sector. It is a place where humans are born, where families and individuals come together, where relationships flourish, and where lives lived are celebrated and treasured.”

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; this year, Bermuda became the first of the Overseas Territories to achieve the extension of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This landmark position sets the stage for a local framework of greater inclusivity and protections for persons with disabilities in Bermuda. To complement the work done last year in the establishment of a formal register of disabled persons, the Government will advance a Disabilities Act to ensure equal access to services, facilities, and employment.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; most persons receiving financial assistance are seniors and persons with disabilities, many of whom are in rest or nursing homes. To further enhance their dignity and bring added relief to those families supporting them, the Financial Assistance Regulations 2004 will be amended to add a \$100 monthly personal allowance to cover the cost of personal care items; allowing this vulnerable population to meet basic hygiene needs.

In keeping with the Government's focus on bringing aid to the most vulnerable populations, the Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors will lead a cross-ministry team, struck to provide further intervention to identified high-risk families. This intensive family preservation team will address the need for basic life skills, ensuring the welfare of families and children with stable and suitable housing, nutritious food, and access to medical care. The multi-generational trauma endured by these families can and must be halted.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; the road to achieving education reform has been a challenging one, but the people of Bermuda can see the results of the years of planning and development in the signature programmes now enhancing the educational experience of the Island's students. In addition to Parish Primary Schools at the Elliot and Harrington Sound Primary School sites, a third signature school for tourism and educational services will open at Sandys Secondary Middle School. Additionally, the School Transformation Teams needed to develop the Parish Primary Schools in Sandys and St. George's will be onboarded. The Prospect Primary School will begin the transformation into a signature school for exceptionalities; this will allow for an expansion and improvement of those programmes now offered at the Dame Majorie Bean Hope Academy.

Signature schools are a culmination of the reforms needed in public education. They give students more choice to pursue their passions, including technical training to help those who wish to work with their hands, practical skills fixing cars, learning to be an electrician or plumber, information technology, and other skilled trades that will offer them steady employment upon leaving school.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; in 2022, SafeLives UK was commissioned to undertake a complete system review of the response to domestic abuse in Bermuda. The review revealed a lack of perpetrator services available on the island, and recommended embedding such services within the criminal justice process through direct referrals and reporting systems for meaningful engagement. Additionally, with the continued support of MARAC – the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Committee comprising of the Centre Against Abuse, the Bermuda Police Service, and the Ministry of Youth, Social Development, and Seniors, a comprehensive, unified approach has been taken to address the scourge of domestic violence in our community. In partnership with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and the Judiciary, the Ministry of Justice will support the creation of a domestic violence court programme, ensuring devoted attention to the protection of victims with speedier protection orders and equally requiring accountability on the part of perpetrators.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; there remains a risk of all that is done to strengthen communities being undone by anti-social behaviours and the impact of gangs. During this Session, the Government will introduce the Violence Reduction Strategy for Bermuda, its mission being:

“To implement strategies that will reduce violence in Bermuda, particularly gang violence, in collaboration with various agencies, with emphasis on Prevention, Intervention, and Integration.”

The strategy will provide the guide for tackling unaddressed, multi-generational trauma, coordinating the agencies charged with intervention, and managing the process by which women and men engaged in this lifestyle re-enter the mainstream of their communities.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; much is made of the fact that we are living longer. This fact once served as an indication of the marvel of modern medicine and improvements in access to healthcare. Today, living longer does not always mean living better. Chronic, non-communicable diseases afflict us at rates that now strain our healthcare system, increase costs within the system at every level, and diminish the quality of the long life which we should be poised to enjoy.

To reduce the increased risk of heart disease, stroke, and other conditions like diabetes, legislation will be enacted to eliminate from our supply those foods containing industrially produced trans fats, recognising the scientifically verified link between these substances and these conditions. As of July 2024, 58 countries around the world (covering 3.7 billion people) – 9 of them in the Americas – have already enacted best practice policies to eliminate trans fats. In 2022, CARICOM Ministers of Trade and Health committed to enacting legislation by December 2024, to eliminate trans fats from the Caribbean food supply by December 2025.

Building on the commitment made in the Mid-year Review, the Government will continue to expand and enhance mental health initiatives through the Ministry of Health. By building on existing programmes, supporting existing third sector agencies, and focussing on youth mental health, a more inclusive and supportive environment will emerge for mental well-being in our community.

As the Government focuses on mental health for our young people, it is vital that we also tackle substance abuse. Utilising the funds awarded in the Mid-Year Review, the Department of National Drug Control will reinstitute Bermuda Youth Counselling Services to address the gaps that exist in substance abuse treatment and counselling for adolescents.

The path to universal health care has taken longer due to the coronavirus pandemic, however, the Government's mission to ensure that all Bermudians have access to quality and affordable health care is undimmed. Universal healthcare will reduce pressure on families and employers while keeping our population healthy, which in turn will reduce long-term costs. While the Government finalises the design of the new healthcare packages, until Bermudians can enrol in the new universal healthcare plan, the Government will continue to expand access and improve the quality of HIP

and FutureCare. Therefore, during this Session, the Government will bring forward changes to legislation to expand access to preventative visits to doctors, provide improved coverage for prescription drugs, and reduce copays. The aim is simple: to reduce out-of-pocket expenses so that more persons get annual check-ups and can afford the medications prescribed by their physician.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; on its founding in 2013, it was intended that the Bermuda Tourism Authority would be self-funding within five years. Now in its second decade of existence, the time has come to perfect that vision and devise the means and method by which taxpayer funding for this independent entity is reduced and eventually eliminated. The journey will include fulsome public consultation on a commissioned report, informed by stakeholder review and specific working groups.

The Tourism Investment Act 2017 will be amended to expand the categories of development which attract incentives to include health and medical tourism, and attractions in the adventure tourism category. The process for applications for tourism attractions will be streamlined to reduce the complexity of the application process. The Government is committed to supporting and growing our tourism industry and ensuring that Bermudian entrepreneurs have easier access to concessions, which is vital to drive local investment in tourism attractions.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; Bermuda's workers have proved to be the solid foundation on which the growing economic recovery of the Island is founded. Labour, in all its various forms, prevented economic collapse in the throes of the pandemic's darkest days, providing mostly uninterrupted services to us all.

During this Session, further strengthening of the minimum wage will be advanced, along with greater protections for workers in the enforcement of Tribunal awards. In alignment with the Position Paper on Retaining the Local Workforce, and to encourage the retention of those Bermudians over 65 who wish to continue working, the Government will bring legislation to eliminate the employer's portion of payroll tax for those Bermudian employees so retained.

The Department of Workforce Development will continue to be the principal vehicle through which Bermudians are equipped with the skills and opportunities to thrive in this growing economy. During this Session, the Department will:

- Expand apprenticeship opportunities in construction and skilled trades
- Expand solar energy training for electricians
- Accelerate hospitality training to meet the growing demands of the industry, and
- Launch a new career development platform to close the workforce gap, by developing students and job seekers, and directly connecting them to employers

To assist long-serving employees faced with unexpected unemployment and loss of income, the Employment Act 2000 will be amended to increase maximum allowable severance pay from 26 weeks to 32 weeks for those employees in continuous employment for 13 years or more. This increase will be complemented by a legislative amendment to remove the requirement to pay payroll tax on redundancy pay. This will help provide stability and fairness for employees during a time of transition.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; The Government believes that every Bermudian should have access to adequate and affordable housing. That reality, coupled with the need to grow our working population to support our ageing population, makes the expansion of Bermuda's housing inventory critical. As such, there will be a need for more housing to accommodate residents of Bermuda and a greater number of individuals living and working in Bermuda.

Bermuda's demographic shifts are exacerbating the challenge of affordable housing in Bermuda, as there are not enough young Bermudians to replace the seniors who are retiring from the workforce. As these seniors retire, the additional labour needed to sustain Bermuda's economy often comes from guest workers. Given the fact that many of our seniors retire in Bermuda, the guest workers who may fill those jobs require accommodation. This reality is just one of the factors in Bermuda's housing challenges.

Whether for rent or for purchase, access to affordable housing eludes too many Bermudians. Through recent pension reforms and the mortgage guarantee program, the Government has improved access to home ownership, benefitting dozens of Bermudians who have now purchased their first home. Existing homeowners have benefitted from the elimination of taxes on mortgage transfers, with many Bermudians moving their mortgage to banks with more competitive rates, saving families thousands of dollars a year. The Government has made available \$50 million of guarantees for the construction of private residential development in the City of Hamilton. And over the last 3 years, the Government has also committed \$25 million additional dollars to support affordable housing, bringing a further 71 affordable units online, with 118 more expected to be delivered through the Bermuda Housing Corporation. These actions have helped, but given the demographic realities, more can and must be done.

Due to Bermuda's limited land, the City of Hamilton will play a more significant role for the expansion of residential development. During this Session, the Government will publish the updated City of Hamilton Plan, and the new St. David's Plan. These comprehensive documents will guide the areas' future development, and for the City of Hamilton, relax the restrictions of building heights for residential development. The Department of Planning will also work with local construction stakeholders to promote modern building practices that can reduce the cost of residential construction to provide more housing more quickly for Bermuda's residents and seniors.

The demographic shift that is expected to continue for the foreseeable future requires strategic action to ensure that more places are available for Bermudians to call their home. Therefore, during this legislative Session, the Legislature will be invited to approve amendments to the Bermuda Housing Act that will give the Government additional powers to tackle the challenge of derelict residential units to provide increased housing inventory for Bermudian families.

For the last year, the Government has been working on changes to the Landlord & Tenant Act to ensure fairness for landlords and tenants. Good tenants have had inadequate legal protection against bad landlords, and far too many good landlords have been victimised by bad tenants. By ensuring greater rights and protections for all, the Government expects more landlords will be incentivised to put vacant units back on the local rental market.

With the recent announcement of a change in the use of Bermudiana Beach, by December of this year, this new proposed direction will see 94 studio, 1-, 2- & 3-bedroom residential units of beachfront property added to fulfil a market demand for additional rental housing. These apartments will be a multi-family community with amenities, catering to young professionals and couples. To more directly assist those seeking housing, the Government will provide support for families already on the BHC's waiting list, to gain access to the units on this property through existing BHC housing initiatives.

While the Government expands housing options for residents, the plight of those who may be housing insecure must also be tackled. The Government has completed the public consultation on a draft plan to end homelessness in Bermuda. During this legislative Session, the Legislature will be invited to review and support the final plan, which will be a collaborative approach to tackling housing insecurity in Bermuda.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; Earlier this year, the Government undertook a 'red tape reduction' consultation. Implementing the suggestions from the public has been made a clear directive to the Public Service and the challenge has been met. The Ministry of Transport will eliminate the requirement to undergo a medical examination every ten years as part of the driver's licence renewal process until age 70; and will reduce the number of vehicle inspections required in the first five years for a new vehicle.

Additionally, all remaining manual TCD processes will be digitized, providing an increasingly seamless experience for the public. The Ministry has also begun the required work to achieve reciprocity of foreign driving licences pursuant to the 1949 Geneva Convention on Road Traffic.

To further harmonise the Public Service Vehicle Industry, a new, fairer payroll tax system for minibus owners will be introduced. Instituted through legislation, this new system will have a fixed payroll tax in three levels, based on the seating capacity of the minibus. Additionally, the payroll tax for taxi owners will be reduced from \$1,000 to \$600 to create a more balanced structure within the industry.

One aspect of red tape reduction is also the review and elimination of outdated laws. The Law Reform Commission, under the Ministry of Justice, has been staffed and will advance proposals for modernising or repealing existing acts. One such act the Government has identified that is ripe for repeal is the Advertisements Regulations Act of 1911.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; the labyrinth that is the Office of Project Management and Procurement's Code of Practice continues to serve as a disincentive to the empowerment of the very small and medium sized businesses the Government is determined to assist. As such, more streamlining of the Code will be undertaken to ensure a simpler, faster, and fairer process.

14 months after a crippling cyberattack, the Government has steadily improved cybersecurity and added to the robustness of the network. This has complemented the digital transformation project now underway to create the promised one-stop-shop portal where the people can easily and securely access government services online.

The Department of Statistics has commenced a modernisation exercise, which will, over time, lead to the faster production of economic statistics. However, most of the information collected from employers is still completed via paper forms. The Government, as part of its ongoing digital transformation initiative, will move the process for annual employment surveys, which are required under law for every employer in Bermuda. It is expected that this process will be trialled in 2025 to enable the 2026 survey to be online.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; Bermuda's connection to the ocean is intrinsic to our identity, our culture, and our economy. Recognising the vital importance of protecting our marine environment, this Government is committed to ensuring the long-term sustainable management of our fisheries and marine resources for future generations.

In this vein, the Government will strengthen marine enforcement through the implementation of the **Marine Resources Enforcement Plan**. This plan will integrate ongoing efforts with key international partners, including the **UK's Bermuda Blue Belt Ocean Shield Programme**, the **Waitt Institute**, and the **US Coast Guard**.

These collaborations will bolster Bermuda's ability to safeguard our territorial sea and Exclusive Economic Zone, ensuring a coordinated and modern approach to marine enforcement.

Further, a raft of legislative improvements will be introduced to address critical management gaps identified during the development of the draft **Blue Prosperity Plan**, in the **Fisheries Act 1972**, as well as through completion of the proposed **Marine Development Act**. These reforms will modernise Bermuda's marine management laws, promoting responsible fishing practices, protecting sensitive habitats, and facilitating the long-term sustainability of our marine ecosystems to ensure prosperity for Bermuda's commercial fishers.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; to provide for the more effective administration of the Legislature, a Bill will be advanced to create a Parliamentary Management Commission which shall be responsible for the administration and management of the House of Assembly and the Senate.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; in a competitive global landscape, the recruitment and retention of talent within the Bermuda Government necessitates a strategic focus on modernization. Key efforts are nearly complete in updating the Public Service Commission Regulations 2001 to modernise the governance structure of the Public Service to align with contemporary best practices. These changes will give more flexibility to managers, allowing for quicker resolution of performance challenges.

One of the most pressing issues identified is the disparity between government and market salaries. A recent review conducted by PwC has highlighted that the Bermuda Government salaries, in many instances, are not competitive. This review recommended the adoption of a new grading model and salary scale to better align public sector compensation with market standards. By addressing these disparities, the Government aims to attract and retain top-tier talent essential for effective governance and public service delivery.

Recognising the importance of leadership within the organization, steps have been taken to implement comprehensive leadership training programs at various levels. These programs are designed to build capacity and foster a culture of continuous improvement and excellence within the public service. By investing in the development of current and future leaders, the Government is ensuring that its workforce is well-equipped to deliver better public services to the people of Bermuda.

These efforts are vital to building a robust and dynamic public service capable of delivering high-quality services to the people of Bermuda, that is also more accountable for its performance. As these initiatives are implemented, the Bermuda Government remains committed to fostering an environment that values and supports its employees, ensuring a sustainable and effective public sector workforce for the future.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; in the 66 years since the enactment of Bermuda's Constitution Order, its provisions have been tested and necessary amendments made for the better governance of these Islands. In recent years, the independent regime by which appointments are made has been found wanting when the rare occasion arises for disciplinary oversight of appointees. This must be remedied. Accordingly, Government House and the Government of Bermuda will work together to develop a revised legal framework for accountability in senior constitutional positions. Public confidence in such high offices is of paramount importance given the power those appointed have to significantly impact the lives of Bermuda's people.

The Government has implemented significant immigration reforms and has tabled proposals to ensure that Bermuda's population is sustainable into the future. However, there is one challenge that the Government has not overcome, and that is the ruling by the court in 2016 which overturned long-standing practice that the Department of Immigration was involved in the granting of believer status in Bermuda. The result of this ruling allows non-Bermudian residents to apply directly to the United Kingdom Government to become naturalised British Overseas Territory Citizens (BOTC). Under our constitution, BOTCs are deemed to belong, granting successful applicants unlimited rights to purchase property in Bermuda. The Government believes that such immigration decisions should not reside in the United Kingdom, but with the locally elected government. Therefore, the Government will begin consultation

leading to a request to the United Kingdom for constitutional change so that the practice, which was observed in Bermuda for many years, be restored, ensuring that these critical immigration decisions involve Bermuda's elected government.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; the Government supports those independent Branches of our Constitutional tapestry who seek to modernise and provide fairer, better service to the people of Bermuda. A fair trial by jury is the bedrock of the criminal justice system, and to ensure the continuity of this right, amendments will be made to the Jurors Act 1971 to increase the pool of available jurors, including to provide for persons up to the age of 75 to serve on juries, to reduce the number of names required for any jury panel from which a jury is selected to hear a trial, and to increase the statutory allowance payable to those persons serving on juries.

Regrettably, eighteen years after the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 2006 was enacted, the fulsome nature of its intended protections for those who encounter the vast powers of the prosecutorial apparatus are not yet in force. Therefore, the remaining provisions of PACE which deal with custody time limits and the detention of arrested persons will be brought into force during this Session.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; too little fairness exists within Bermuda's banking sector. Whether it be a lack of access to banking services, or continually increasing fees or high interest rates, Bermudians are rightly enraged when they are asked to pay more while local banks proudly report increased profits.

Following consultation by the Bermuda Monetary Authority, the Banks and Deposit Companies Act 1999 will be amended to require basic banking services to be provided for all persons, to ensure that all residents have access to banking services. Regulations under that act to place limits on fees charged by banks will finally be advanced in this Session.

Fairness in financial services cannot just be limited to banking. Since the introduction of the National Pension Scheme Act in 1998, pension administrators have earned an estimated \$500 million in fees. These fees, which have been found to be higher than in other jurisdictions, reduce the retirement savings for Bermuda's workers. During

this Session, the Government will introduce regulations that will cap fees paid to pension plan administrators, resulting in substantial savings for Bermudians. These changes will mean that a Bermudian worker entering the workforce would have \$75,000 more in their pension account at retirement.

While the Government advances fairness in financial services, we must also increase financial literacy in Bermuda. To ensure that the Government's efforts in advancing financial literacy are appropriately targeted, the Ministry of Finance will launch a financial literacy survey, followed by a campaign of financial literacy initiatives delivered in partnership with pension administrators to improve financial literacy in Bermuda.

To support the implementation of Bermuda's corporate income tax regime, legislation will be introduced to update the Corporate Income Tax (CIT) framework and address matters relating to use of excess tax revenue. Based on the recommendations from the Tax Reform Commission and the International Tax Working Group, this legislation will codify how funds collected by the Corporate Income Tax regime will be reserved for use. The projections state that with the next 10 years, the Government should have enough in additional tax receipts to eliminate Bermuda's Debt and establish a sovereign wealth fund to make strategic investments for Bermuda's future.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; a worrying consolidation in key industries has occurred in Bermuda. In critical sectors, consumers may be faced with the loss of genuine choice in service and of the competition that is essential to achieve quality delivery at appropriate costs.

Recent local developments in food supply and financial services can have an ongoing adverse impact on prices, which this community can ill-afford. Currently, the Government is limited in its options outside of sectors under the Regulatory Authority, to provide conditions for, or to reject, mergers that may concentrate the provision of essential goods or services that may reduce competition and increase prices. Given the real challenges with costs in Bermuda, residents rightly should expect that the Government should act in the public interest if it is deemed necessary to do so. Therefore, during this legislative Session, the Government will commence consultations on amendments to legislation to allow scrutiny of local mergers and acquisitions that concentrate significant power in essential sectors.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; in addition to the measures set out above, during this Session, the Legislature will consider the following Bills:

- Clean Air Bill
- Consumer Protection (Equitable Relief) Amendment Bill
- Education Authority Bill
- Electronic Communications (Cybercrime) Amendment Bill
- Insurance Amendment Bill
- Landlord and Tenant & Rent Increases (Domestic Premises) Amendment Bills
- Payroll Tax Amendment (No.2) Bill
- Public Access to Information Amendment Bill

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; the Trinidadian writer, historian, and journalist CLR James said:

“When history is written as it ought to be written, it is the moderation and long patience of the masses at which men will wonder, not their ferocity.”

In Bermuda, that “long patience of the masses” is being tried by unfairness in too many sectors. Unfairness which inevitably spills over into the lives of the people, to sometimes devastating effect. Unrestrained practices in healthcare services, banking, and now food supply, which have prioritised profits over people, and which taunt the Government to act, cannot go unanswered. The covenant of public service means facing down ingrained systems and setting an agenda of fairness and equity which governs for all and not for the few. That is the Government’s mantra for this Session and beyond.

Traditionally at this point, the Governor is invited to add some words of her own:

The Governor

The principles of equality, fairness, good governance and a separation of power underpins Bermuda's Constitution. They are as relevant today as they were in 1968. That is why I have been diligent in protecting the separation of powers between key institutions such as the judiciary and the police service but the fundamental principle of operational independence necessitates accountability. Rain, blow or shine, I have been guided throughout my tenure by the principles of integrity and accountability in my support for good governance. I am proud of the progress we have made together but know that more must be done to ensure the continued trust and confidence of those that we serve.

I remain inspired by the resilience, drive and ingenuity of the communities that I have had the privilege to spend time with during my tenure. There is no doubting Bermuda's rich cultural diversity, enviable natural environment and the abundance of passionate advocates and philanthropists. There is no doubting the intellectual capital, Bermuda's global reputation as a financial centre or how attractive it is as a base for international business. These are some of Bermuda's strengths which can provide opportunities and prosperity for all. They are strengths to be nurtured and protected but not to be complacent about.

As I prepare to lay down my feathers for the last time and leave this unique territory that my family and I have made our home for the last four years, I am sure that I will continue to be a non-Bermudian flag-bearer who remains invested in Bermuda's continued success.

Madame President and Members of the Senate; Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly; I declare this Session open, and may God guide you in your deliberations.

Her Excellency Rena Lalgie
Governor and Commander-in-Chief
8th November 2024



GOVERNMENT OF BERMUDA



Senator Leslie L. Robinson, J.P.

Junior Minister for Economy and Labour
and Public Works
November 2022 – October 2024



Kenneth Bascome, JP, MP

Former Member of Parliament,
Constituency 1
December 2012 – July 2017