Good evening, Bermuda,

Governance is not without its peaks and valleys. As your Premier, it is my duty and honour to earnestly inform and guide our island through each milestone with transparency and intent.

Our recent journey has seen us navigate through a pandemic, a cyber-attack on our Government, the threats of Mother Nature, and historic economic challenges. Each time, we've proven ourselves to be resilient and united in our resolve to emerge stronger together.

Before I discuss our government’s vision for the new legislative session, I wish to take a moment to speak on the tragic loss of Marco Warren, a vibrant soul, which has left an immense void in our community and, most importantly, in the hearts of his family and loved ones.

The lack of clarity around the circumstances has caused pain and frustration. The recent arrest and charge levied against a former senator is cause for concern within our community. In the wake of these events, it’s been disheartening to witness the political machinations and personal attacks that have sought to exploit our community’s pain and mislead the public.

As a father, the anguish of Marco’s family resonates deeply with me, and my heart still mourns for their loss and that of Marco’s own child, who will never know his father, as many of us did.

My commitment to you, as your Premier, is to continue to support the pursuit of justice for Marco’s family, as I have done since May. I pray that in this moment, our community can come together to support one another, continue to be there for Marco’s family, and allow the justice system to run its course.

The Government will continue to support the Bermuda Police Service on this, and we will continue to drive our agenda forward on behalf of the people of Bermuda. Our mandate from the electorate is clear, and it’s upon this foundation that we build our future. After last week’s Convening of the Legislature, all parliamentarians are looking forward to the true start of the working session of the House of Assembly tomorrow. Tonight, I want to frame tomorrow’s debate in the House and take this opportunity to communicate directly with you, the people of Bermuda.
The 2023 Speech from the Throne, ‘Serving the People,’ is more than a title—it’s a promise, a declaration of our dedication to you, the people of Bermuda. It is also a continuation of how we have carried out our service since returning to office, with the goal of making Bermuda a fairer and more equitable society.

In that time, the Government has worked tirelessly to respond to the concerns that we have heard from residents. What we heard from the people of Bermuda was that they wanted fairer taxation, education reform, affordable healthcare, support for our seniors, and more job opportunities in our economy. I am proud of the progress that your Government has made in service of the people of Bermuda over the last six years in addressing these matters and others. We reduced the tax burden on workers to its lowest level in 30 years while ensuring that higher earners pay more.

We introduced the first signature schools at Cedarbridge Academy and the Berkeley Institute while opening our first parish primary schools - and this year, for the first time since we were elected, enrollment has increased in our public school system.

We enhanced healthcare benefits under FutureCare and HIP while keeping our promise to increase senior pensions in line with the rate of inflation.

We introduced a minimum wage for the first time in Bermuda’s history and implemented initiatives such as the Economic Recovery Plan, which has supported job creation and economic growth in Bermuda.

And finally, we have worked to revitalise our tourism product, providing more incentives to local entrepreneurs to invest in tourism attractions that will support new hotel developments in Bermuda, such as Fairmont Southampton.

However, we recognise that despite this progress, Bermudians still face incredible challenges due to issues such as the lack of affordable housing, the cost of healthcare, and the cost of living.

That is why this year, alongside the introduction of the Corporate Income Tax Bill, the Tax Reform Commission will fulfill the Government’s commitment to examine existing taxes and make recommendations for significant changes that will reduce the cost of living and doing business in Bermuda.

We will establish core healthcare services to be available to all residents through the universal healthcare benefits package that will be introduced in the coming years to ensure that quality healthcare is accessible and affordable for all.

We will continue our efforts to increase the stock of affordable housing through investment into the Bermuda Housing Corporation and support first-time homebuyers through initiatives such as the Mortgage Guarantee Programme, which has already put 49 Bermudians on the path to homeownership. Change takes time, and I understand that many are impatient, but it’s important that the transformative changes being made to healthcare, public education, and taxes are done right.
We have also heard the frustrations you have expressed on the need for improved public services. Too many have complained that phones are not answered, and emails are not returned. That is why we have also committed this parliamentary year to focus on improving customer service for our residents through further digitisation, streamlined processes, and better responsiveness to deliver services that meet the high standards that taxpayers expect and deserve.

We will improve customer service and responsiveness at the Department of Immigration. We will make further streamlining to planning rules to reduce frustrations faced by residents, we will implement online payments for government services, we will purchase a new asphalt plant to increase the pace of road paving, and we will streamline hiring for Government departments to ensure that the people are in place to deliver better customer services. The Government’s focus on improving public services is designed to ensure the successful implementation of those policies that are supported by you, the people. Good policies or good laws mean little if their good is not felt by the hardworking families of this Island.

To better implement these policies and bring about the legislative changes outlined last week, I have decided to realign some ministerial responsibilities:

In keeping with a recent review conducted by the Management Consulting Section, responsibility for Youth Affairs will move to make a newly styled Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors under Minister Tinee Furbert. Recognising that most of its recipients are seniors & the disabled, Financial Assistance also becomes part of this Ministry. I have also asked the Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs to assume responsibility for all matters related to Caricom and the area of constitutional reform.

The Department of Planning will now move to the Cabinet Office under Minister Vance Campbell, while responsibility for tourism will move to a ministry to be styled as the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport under Senator Owen Darrell.

These changes in responsibility have been provided to the Governor and will take effect tomorrow, 10th November.

Twenty-five years ago today, Bermuda’s democracy took a significant step in its development. The first change in Government ushered in an era which strengthened our community and demonstrated that the people cannot be taken for granted.

As I reflect on that historic 1998 General Election, I am reminded of great women and men on both sides of the aisle who embraced the change that came with grace and a commitment to working together for Bermuda and her people.

Service was ingrained in that generation of leaders, and their example is one we must emulate. Serving the people is the high calling for all of us in public service, and the core ideal of this Throne Speech is to execute on that calling. Thank you, good night, and may God continue to bless us all.