



REMARKS BY:

**The Hon. Walter Roban, JP MP
Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs**

Throne Speech Initiatives

14th November 2022

Good day to members of the media and the listening public. Thank you for your attendance and for watching this Press Conference.

Following the November 5th Speech from the Throne, I am excited to be here today to share with you the Ministry of Home Affairs' priorities over the upcoming parliamentary session. The Ministry of Home Affairs remains committed to plans and initiatives that will protect our environment and encourage the growth and development of green initiatives.

To that end, and as stated in the Speech from the Throne, over the upcoming session, the Ministry of Home Affairs will focus on introducing:

- A Bill Reducing Single-Use Plastics;
- Amendments to the Clean Air Act;

- A Marine Development Act; and,
- Amendments to the Electricity Act 2016.

Bill Reducing Single-Use Plastics

The Government has undertaken many consultations on the topic of eliminating single-use plastics with the public, including importers, retailers and grocers, the hospitality sector and groups that have been advocating for the elimination of single-use plastics. Representatives from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Public Works, together with various community stakeholders, held five public information sessions, with some 250 persons registering for the presentations. Also, the consultation page on the Government of Bermuda Citizens Forum received the third-highest public response regarding ideas generated and the fifth-highest number of participants, with nearly sixty unique respondents.

During the consultation period, the Ministry engaged with hundreds of persons, and I sincerely thank all of Bermuda for their interest and participation in this critical conversation.

Having analysed the feedback, the results from the public consultations leave no doubt. A large majority, some three-quarters of the respondents, support the policy to regulate single-use plastics in Bermuda.

And so, as announced in the Throne Speech, The Government will introduce a Bill to reduce single-use plastics. We will take a phased approach, with the first phase beginning this session.

As we move forward with legislating single-use plastics, we will ensure the most positive impact on the environment and human health whilst simultaneously minimising any adverse economic effects.

We are aware of the need to:

- Ensure that the phase-out periods are realistic;
- Clearly communicate the legislated requirements;
- Make allowances for some single-use plastic items that do not currently have alternatives; and,
- Allow exemptions for medical and other uses.

Further public consultations will occur. These include meeting with and sharing the draft legislation with those most affected, such as grocery stores, importers, restaurants, caterers, retail outlets, and those in the hospitality industry to obtain their feedback. We will also explore how the Government can help businesses manage the move away from single-use plastic. Considerations include altering import tariffs to minimise economic impacts. At the same time, we will continue public education campaigns designed to support the behavioural changes required from all of us.

Amendments to the Clean Air Act

In line with protecting our environment from single-use plastics, we must also work to ensure that the air we breathe is safe.

Initially developed in 1993, Bermuda's Clean Air Act used concentration limits based on international data available, at that

time, on the known health effects on people, including respiratory and cardiovascular effects, such as asthma at that time. The island's outside air quality continues to be monitored to these standards.

In the thirty years since drafting these Regulations, understanding the health effects of air contaminants from combustion-engine sources has been refined. Air quality standards created more recently in overseas jurisdictions are typically more stringent than those used in Bermuda. Additionally, other than as a nuisance under the Public Health Act 1949, offensive odours under current legislation are not adequately covered.

The Department frequently responds to odour complaints by the public caused by licensed facilities, such as spray paint booths, the BELCO electrical generators, sewage treatment plants, large fuel storage areas, Southside crematorium, Marsh Folly compost facility and, although rarely, Tynes Bay Waste to Energy Facility.

Amendments to the Clean Air Act will update and introduce new measures to address air quality standards that align with the UK and EU, based on the latest health and safety data on the exposure of air contaminants to humans. They will also introduce measures to minimise as much as practicable the impact that nuisance odours have on the general public, especially those in residential areas.

Marine Development Act

Now the public will know my passion for protecting the environment. I have spoken on initiatives that protect and improve our land and air. Now I wish to expand on the Marine Development

Act, beginning with what has become my favourite quote on the topic.

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children."

With that in mind, the public will be aware of the extensive consultation on the Draft Blue Prosperity Plan that started on September 12th and continues to be progressed by the Bermuda Ocean Prosperity Programme.

Originally scheduled to end on November 12th, the consultation period was extended to December 31st, 2022, to give the public and key stakeholder groups more time to understand and provide feedback on how the Plan will shape the economic and environmental decisions around Bermuda's marine environment.

Thus far, the information collected from the public consultation period has helped refine the Draft Plan to ensure it achieves the social, economic, and environmental impacts that matter to the people of Bermuda.

In support of this, the Government will table legislation providing the framework for managing the Marine Spatial Plan and introduce the governance structure of the Blue Economy Fund. This fund will also provide the investment model for the Green Energy Fund, which will be the source for the introduction of Community Solar.

Amendments to the Electricity Act 2016

Community Solar will be a smaller version of utility solar and will not usually require licences from the Regulatory Authority. It will serve as an investment vehicle and provide entrepreneurial and solar installer job opportunities for Bermudians.

Community Solar through the Green Energy Fund will not only fund the solar installations throughout our community, provide dividends to investors but, perhaps most importantly, benefit those families that cannot afford to invest in the installation of the projects. Amendments to the Electricity Act 2016 will allow the launch of this exciting new and innovative framework.

Conclusion

I look forward to the successful implementation of these initiatives, and I am confident in the opportunities and improved standard of life they will provide to the people of Bermuda.

Thank you.