



Remarks by:

The Senator the Honorable Kim N. Wilkerson, JP, Attorney-General and Minister of Justice

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Good morning, everyone.

Bermudians rely on a justice system that is fair and works for everyone whether you are going to court, serving on a jury, turning your life around after making a mistake, or standing up for your rights.

The Ministry of Justice is responsible for making sure our courts run smoothly, our laws are upheld, our correctional facilities are safe and focused on rehabilitation, and that constitutional rights are protected. We also oversee legal services for the Government.

The Budget, presented in Parliament and debated by my Junior Minister, Dennis Lister III, yesterday, invests in strengthening these services, improving the efficiency of the courts, supporting rehabilitation, and ensuring that the rule of law remains strong in Bermuda.

Our Ministry oversees some of Bermuda's most essential institutions: the courts, corrections, Legal Aid and the systems that safeguard public safety and uphold our democratic values. These are the pillars of a just society, and maintaining and improving them is both our duty and our promise.

This year, the Ministry of Justice has been allocated **\$63.24 million**, an increase of **\$5.5 million** from last year. This represents a strategic investment in public trust, improved service delivery, and stronger community safety. Let me walk you through some key initiatives and what they mean for Bermudians.

Modernising Corrections and Supporting Rehabilitation

Our correctional facilities play an important role in keeping Bermuda safe. But they are not just about security, they are also about second chances. They help people take responsibility, learn new skills, and return to the community ready to live productive lives. When we invest in Corrections, we are investing in safer neighbourhoods, stronger families, and a better Bermuda overall.

This year, the Department of Corrections has been allocated **\$26.9 million** to support major improvements across the system. These upgrades will make our facilities more secure, more efficient, and better equipped for both staff and those in custody.

A major focus is strengthening our frontline team. **\$20 million** has been set aside to recruit additional correctional officers and cover their salaries. This will stabilise staffing levels to ensure our facilities remain safe, secure, and properly managed. Supporting our officers means a more supportive environment for everyone inside the system.

We are also addressing long-standing issues within the facilities. **\$638,000** in capital funding will replace outdated furniture and essential fixtures. These upgrades may seem small, but they directly improve safety, daily operations, and the overall environment for staff and inmates alike.

Another key step forward is the introduction of a **new Corrections Management System**. This modern electronic system will replace outdated manual processes, bringing Bermuda in line with international best practices. It will improve record-keeping, streamline sentence management, and strengthen oversight, making the system more secure, organised, and transparent.

The additional funding will also go into **prison refurbishments**, focusing on upgrades to ageing buildings and infrastructure. These improvements again enhance safety and security, improve day-to-day operations, and ensure our facilities meet modern standards. They also follow the recommendations of the recent prison review, keeping us on the right path.

Taken together, these investments strengthen Bermuda's correctional system, support rehabilitation, and help build a justice system that we can be proud of.

Enhancing Support for Treatment Courts and Probation

The Department of Court Services plays a vital role in helping people get back on track through Bermuda's treatment courts and probation services. These programmes provide structure, guidance, and supervision for individuals working to change their lives and are a lynch pin of our rehabilitative system. They are an essential part of a justice system focused not just on punishment, but on progress.

This year, **\$5.5 million** has been allocated to support this work. This funding will sustain staffing levels, strengthen partnerships across the justice system and improve processes to make services more efficient and effective, with an acute focus on domestic abuse reform.

These investments show our commitment to rehabilitation, accountability and safer communities for the long term.

Supporting the Department of Public Prosecutions

The Department of Public Prosecutions has been allocated **\$4.4 million** this year to carry out its mandate. Part of this funding will support preparations for the **2027 International Prosecutors Conference**, a major event that will bring legal professionals from around the world to Bermuda.

Hosting this conference puts Bermuda on the global stage and highlights the professionalism and high standards of our prosecutors. It also provides the chance to learn from international colleagues, share best practices, and strengthen prosecutorial work here at home.

By welcoming the global prosecutorial community, we build stronger international relationships, support professional development, and continue to develop a justice system that is modern, respected, and effective.

Strengthening the Ministry's Core Services

The Ministry's headquarters supports the systems that protect Bermuda's reputation and uphold the integrity of our justice system.

This year's Budget includes **\$376,000** to meet the Ministry's obligations under the **National Anti-Money Laundering Committee (NAMLC) framework**. This funding ensures we stay aligned with international standards for combatting money laundering and the financing of terrorism, protecting Bermuda's global reputation and financial stability. Furthermore, the Financial Intelligence unit has been allocated **\$ 2.25 million**.

The Budget also facilitates the relocation of the Legal Aid Office. This move will create a more efficient workspace for staff and improve accessibility for clients.

Together, these investments strengthen the Ministry's ability to meet national and international obligations while improving the quality and accessibility of services for the people of Bermuda. Additionally, there will be a review of the Legal Aid system to ensure it continues to have the desired impact.

On the matter of jury reform, the nationwide consultations have now concluded, and the feedback received from the public has been invaluable. We will be moving forward with the recommendations that emerged from that process, with the goal of modernizing how juries are selected, supported and managed in Bermuda.

Acknowledgements

Finally, I want to thank the dedicated teams within the Ministry of Justice who work hard every day to turn our plans into real results. I am continually impressed by the professionalism, skill and commitment of our officers, staff and everyone supporting our justice system.

To the people of Bermuda; your support, your feedback, and your patience mean more than I can say. We are not simply maintaining a system. We are, together, shaping a justice system that is stronger, fairer and fit for the future.

Thank you.