



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by:

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Minister of Economy and Labour

Updates on the Bermuda Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027

Strategic Priority 1: Local and International Business Retention and Expansion

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Mr. Speaker,

I lay before this Honourable House a progress report on the Economic Development Strategy 2023-2027.

The Economic Development Strategy is Bermuda's roadmap for strengthening and diversifying the economy, creating opportunity for Bermudians, and building a more secure and inclusive future. Economic development shapes the cost of living and the services Bermudians rely on. This report sets out what has been delivered, what is underway, and what comes next.

Mr. Speaker,

I will begin with *Strategic Priority 1: Local and International Business Retention and Expansion*, which focuses on retaining and expanding existing business by removing barriers to investment and jobs and keeping Bermuda efficient, trusted, and competitive as global conditions evolve.

Key highlights include:

- expanded progress on residential and urban development within Bermuda's Economic Empowerment Zones, where the Urban Development Authority has identified 31 priority sites and developed conceptual designs that could deliver nearly 350 new residential units,
- the Bermuda Business Development Agency strengthening Bermuda's global competitiveness through enhanced industry engagement, targeted market research, and international outreach promoting the island's trust, fintech, and asset-management sectors, and,
- complementing these efforts, the Bermuda Tourism Authority has expanded immersive cultural, culinary, and heritage offerings, such as guided tours, Art Month, Restaurant Weeks, and live entertainment, contributing to higher cultural-experience satisfaction and increased off-season visitation.

Mr. Speaker,

To start, the Bermuda Business Development Agency (BDA), has now transitioned to an investment promotion agency, and is working with industry leaders to understand what would make Bermuda more competitive. It structured its workstreams to focus on three main pillars: Established (being financial services, insurance and risk), Proactive (high net worth services, legal and regtech, and infrastructure), and Edge/Aspirational (the blue economy). These pillars are undergoing the

next stage of intensive analysis to ensure the correct priorities, sectors and markets are set.

The BDA has also been working to strengthen Bermuda's presence right where investment decisions are made, building relationships with those who shape fund structures and alternative investments, and ensuring that Bermuda's advantages are consistently presented. The goal is straightforward: to increase high-quality business activity and investment flows by showing up consistently, with clarity, and with the right partners at the table.

Mr. Speaker,

Alongside market-facing work, competitiveness also depends on Bermuda's capacity to house the people our economy needs. That is why significant work has been led by the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation (BEDC) and the Urban Development Authority (UDA) to drive residential development and regeneration through Approved Residential Schemes in the Economic Empowerment Zones.

This work has moved well beyond policy and into active delivery, including island-wide mapping of development opportunities, updated needs and demand analysis, and early design concepts to shorten the path from interest to construction.

Mr. Speaker,

To unlock development at pace, and because revitalising Hamilton and increasing the supply of housing in and around the city supports business activity and reduces pressure on the rental market, the Approved Residential Schemes programme now includes the City of Hamilton – the

Approved Hamilton Residential Scheme (AHRS). One AHRS application has already been approved, and more are in process. In addition, the BEDC has introduced the “Approved Residential Scheme Kickstart Programme,” a guarantee-backed programme that aims to reduce financing risk and to support lending for major residential and mixed-use projects in all four of the Island’s EEZs.

It is worth noting that many units across the Island remain empty simply because the renovation costs place refurbishment out of reach for many homeowners. The Private Sector Refurbishment Programme is bringing empty units back into use by offering up to \$125,000 in interest-free support for refurbishment, repaid from rental income. To date, 48 landlords have registered interest, and 32 properties have been assessed.

Mr. Speaker,

Strategic Priority 1 also includes support for local business growth and entrepreneurship, and the BEDC is delivering a range of support products for that purpose. More broadly, the BEDC is targeting the barriers that most often block small business success, including costs, finance, skills, and access to markets. This is delivered through concessions, financing support, incubator and education programmes, infrastructure support, and networking.

Promoting Bermuda’s development opportunities is also key to progressing economic development. In 2025, the BEDC and UDA hosted the first Bermuda Infrastructure and Development Summit during International Economic Development Week, convening local and international stakeholders to identify opportunities, gaps, and solutions.

To support cost reduction and build capacity in the sector, the UDA also convened the 2025 BUILD Mixer, bringing international expertise on alternative building methods together with local stakeholders and site visits.

Mr. Speaker,

Competitiveness also depends on a strong visitor economy and reliable public services, and work is strengthening access and improving visitor experience year-round.

Mr. Speaker,

Airlift has strengthened over the past two years, causing total airline seats to go up 51% and more than doubling origin markets. In 2025, the Ministry of Tourism and Transport, Culture and Sport formally tasked the Bermuda Tourism Authority (BTA) to lead the Air Service Development Committee to coordinate and execute Bermuda's airlift strategy. As such, the BTA continues to work closely with key stakeholders to ensure that airlift expansion aligns with visitor demand and supports the long-term sustainability of routes.

Looking ahead, the BTA is undertaking a detailed assessment of the incremental airlift required to support the re-opening of the Fairmont Southampton.

The BTA is also shifting the visitor offer towards guided experiences led by local interpreters, supported by year-round arts, culture, sport, and heritage programming. Visitor satisfaction in 2025 increased by 15%.

To strengthen service standards and support the hospitality workforce, the

BTA launched AnchorBDA, which more than 250 people have completed. AnchorBDA is part of BTA+, an online learning platform that has so far offered over 400 courses to over 895 users.

Mr. Speaker,

In agriculture, practical steps have been taken to support local production and resilience with technical assistance, better infrastructure, and targeted policy improvements.

The Integrated Agriculture Strategy is advancing food and nutritional resilience by modernising infrastructure and strengthening services to farmers. Key deliverables include the completion of an arable land audit, upgraded post-harvest storage capacity, and modernised inspection and surveillance capability. Furthermore, work is ongoing that ensures the Agricultural Service Centre remains fully operational and ready to support farmers.

Mr. Speaker,

Regarding the blue economy, important planning work has progressed. The draft Marine Spatial Plan is completed, and the draft Blue Economy Strategy has been prepared. Next steps depend on drafting and enacting the Marine Development Act, which will provide the framework to take both documents forward. Indeed, Honourable Members will recall that the Marine Resources Enforcement Strategy was laid in the House last Friday to address protections for existing protected areas.

Mr. Speaker,

The House will also be aware of my recent announcement of Bermuda's Fintech Strategy, which sets out a clear plan to grow this sector

responsibly and ensure that Bermudians benefit from the opportunities that it creates.

Bermuda's Fintech Strategy is focused on adoption, trust, and Bermudian opportunity. Over the review period, licensing activity under the Digital Asset Business Act (DABA) has increased significantly, alongside continued growth in innovative insurer licences, reflecting sustained international interest in Bermuda's regulated offering. Notably, companies holding the most mature form of DABA authorisation, the Class F (Full) licence, increased from eight in 2022 to 18 in 2024. At the first quarter of 2025, the Bermuda Monetary Authority had issued a total of 39 digital assets licences and 14 insurtech licences across all Class types.

Maintaining an efficient, business-friendly operating environment remains essential. As recently as two weeks ago, the BDA launched the Bermuda Leadership Exchange stakeholder series to align joint activities and communications and to use stakeholder insight to strengthen competitiveness and ease of doing business.

Mr. Speaker,

This concludes my update on *Strategic Priority 1: Local and International Business Retention and Expansion*.

My next update to this Honourable House will cover the next two Strategic Priorities- 2: *Business Attraction and Investment Promotion*, and 3: *Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development*.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**