



## **Ministerial Statement**

**By**

**The Hon. Zane DeSilva, JP, MP**

**Minister of Housing and Municipalities**

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### **Update on Government Housing Initiatives**

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**Mr. Speaker,**

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with a timely update on this Government's resolute commitment to addressing one of the most demanding needs facing our community, namely the provision of accessible, high-quality, and affordable housing for the people of Bermuda.

**Mr. Speaker,** while certain detached commentators and predictable political critics have recently taken to the pages of the local periodicals—specifically the *Royal Gazette*—to call into question this Government's vision and dedication, let me

assure this House and the listening public that we are not distracted. We are focused on delivery.

Let us be completely clear, **Mr. Speaker**: we are reading critiques from individuals who sat around a Cabinet table for years and failed to deliver the affordable housing Bermuda desperately needed. Now, when the problem has been compounded in part by their years of inaction, they attempt to lecture us through newspaper columns. While they look backwards and try to score political points, this Government is looking forward and moving dirt. We are advancing a robust, thoroughly evaluated, and fiscally responsible strategy to bring real and lasting relief to Bermudian families.

**Mr. Speaker**, there are those who would have the public believe that a project of this scale should be micro-managed directly from the Minister's desk, or that working through our quangos somehow equates to a lack of oversight. Let me categorically correct that misconception.

**Mr. Speaker,** let us be clear about how this Government operates. Ministries' structures are about accountability, efficiency, and statutory alignment. The Ministry of Housing and Municipalities is designed to develop policy, establish strategy, and enforce strict regulatory oversight. We are not here to build empires within the civil service or duplicate roles. By directing this work through the established statutory frameworks of the Bermuda Land Management Corporation and the Bermuda Housing Corporation, we are utilizing the exact entities that hold the specific legislative mandates, the specialized real estate portfolios, and the technical mechanisms necessary for large-scale delivery.

By pairing our quangos with nimble, specialized private sector entities, and leveraging the invaluable expertise of local engineers, project managers, and technical professionals, we harness the corporate flexibility and precise technical expertise required to manage massive construction and housing portfolios. This structure ring-fences the project commercially, ensures a rigorous separation between policy setting and procurement execution, and allows us to these housing initiatives with the speed and strict oversight that the Bermudian public expects.

We are not letting these entities work in silos. **Mr. Speaker**, project delivery will be a highly coordinated, joint effort overseen by the BHC in strict collaboration with the BLMC. To formalize their relationship both during and after the construction work, a Memorandum of Understanding is currently being established between BLMC and BHC to explicitly map out roles, responsibilities, procurement guidelines, and project delivery timelines.

This structure allows us to move quickly on a thoroughly vetted strategy. The BLMC has, in collaboration with the BHC and the Ministry, pressed on over the past several months with intense feasibility assessments, site identifications, and engineering evaluations. Traditional Bermudian construction was examined, but, frankly, **Mr. Speaker**, it is too expensive and takes much too long when our people need housing now.

Following rigorous assessments that included physical site visits to overseas manufacturing facilities and multiple vendor evaluations, precast concrete construction was determined to be the absolute best solution for our island and for our timeframe. It is cost-effective, incredibly fast to assemble, exceptionally durable, and resilient against Bermuda's harsh and varied environmental conditions.

Furthermore, **Mr. Speaker**, despite what the skeptics are claiming in the media, this is no ‘untried experiment’. This method has an established and highly successful local track record. It was the exact methodology which was successfully deployed by the BLMC under its former entity, the West End Development Corporation—or WEDCo—to replace the dilapidated and now-demolished Victoria Row buildings. We know it works, we know it lasts, and because the BLMC has already done it, they are the ideal entity to lead this project. In fact, **Mr. Speaker**, let us not forget that if the OBA had not stepped in and scaled back that exact development following the 2012 election, this country would have had an additional 80 affordable homes available for our people well over a decade ago.

**Mr. Speaker,** I am proud and excited to announce that this initial phase of the Affordable Housing Programme will deliver 229 residential units strategically spread across four main sites:

- 24 two-bedroom units in Albert Row, Dockyard;
- 24 three-bedroom units and 12 two-bedroom units in Victoria Place, Dockyard;
- 110 one-bedroom units in Southampton, adjacent to Dr. Cann Park;
- 12 two-bedroom units and 12 three-bedroom units on Tommy Fox Road in St. David's; and
- 35 single-occupancy units retrofitted in the existing Channel House in St. David's, specifically for senior living.

To ensure the highest standards, two premier partners have been identified, each with successful experience in Bermuda and the capability to meet our strict Building Codes. They are Coastal Precast Systems of Virginia, USA, who will be supporting delivery at Albert Row, Victoria Place, and Tommy Fox Road; and Preconco Limited of Barbados to support the project at Dr. Cann Park II.

**Mr. Speaker,** let me make one thing abundantly clear to this House and to the critics: Bermudian contractors and service providers will be at the very heart of this project. Local industry will play a key role in driving the site preparation, civil works, foundations, infrastructure installation, and complete interior fit-outs. Channel House will be upgraded entirely by local contractors. We are marrying off-site manufacturing efficiency with a direct, massive investment into the pockets of local workers.

A project of this magnitude requires robust financial backing and commercial discipline, not political rhetoric. I am pleased to inform this House that financing has been fully secured through Bermuda Commercial Bank and Clarien Bank Bermuda, backed by a Government Guarantee.

**Mr. Speaker,** the total estimated investment for this initial phase is \$114,750,000. Every single dollar of this investment represents a direct injection into the social fabric and economic future of our country.

Running this work through our quangos does not mean a reduction in oversight—in fact, it means a more efficient, rigorous, commercially structured process. The BLMC-led procurement framework includes the finalization of technical design specifications, structured engagement with suppliers, and evaluations based strictly on cost, capacity, code compliance, and delivery timelines. Contract finalization and mobilization will remain subject to all necessary approvals under BLMC’s purview.

**Mr. Speaker**, while our overall vision through the Housing Strategy and our commitments for the future are important, I want to make it abundantly clear to this Honourable House and to the listening public: we are not just talking about what we will build. **Mr. Speaker**, I want to share what this Government is doing right now, again through the BHC. There is a lively parallel track of affordable developments in train, approaching the finish line, and being delivered in the background while we hear the criticisms wash by. Let me quiet that noise with some more good news.

**Mr. Speaker**, this House will recall last week's news about the work at Middletown- it is now officially complete. The BHC is actively working with four Bermudian families to move them into these newly renovated two-bedroom units immediately. And, unlike the unrealistic market prices being charged elsewhere, the rent is set at a fair, truly affordable \$1,400 per month. That is real relief, delivered right now.

At the Chelsea houses in St. David's, \$2.7 million have been invested to build 5 new units, consisting of two three-bedroom units and three two-bedroom units. The local contractor, Millwood Construction, is working diligently and I am pleased to confirm that they are on target for completion in July.

The Battery Phase II development, also in St. David's, is in progress, and invests \$3.75 million to deliver another twelve units, consisting of four two-bedrooms, two one-bedrooms, and six studios. This work will be completed between August and September of this year.

Furthermore, **Mr. Speaker**, new life is being breathed into the Harmony Club campus with an intensive, multi-phase regeneration project. \$2.6 million is being invested into Harmony Terrace North to completely repurpose sixteen efficiency units. Whenever we disturb older buildings, there are bound to be some unforeseen surprises, and this project is no different. Old ductwork, slabs discovered in ceiling spaces, and the need to shift a wall to create a proper pump room are among the challenges being dealt with. Completion of these works is targeted for early 2027.

Looking ahead again into 2027, Harmony Terrace South will see another sixteen efficiency units completely retrofitted, with a target completion for the third quarter of 2027. To ensure that the Harmony Club campus is able to adequately serve its tenants, the BHC is spending \$360,000 on trenching and essential infrastructure upgrades for BELCo metering, transformers, communications, and piped water to be installed. Materials for this work are arriving on site within the next few weeks. This work is expected to be complete in the third quarter of this year.

**Mr. Speaker**, despite the absolute nonsense being spun in the media, you can see that no one is dragging their feet on this side of the House. We are moving with purpose, we are moving with speed, and we are moving to deliver for the Bermudian people. Subject to Planning approvals, contract finalization, and site preparation, we anticipate breaking ground in or around August of this year. From the moment construction begins, we are looking at an aggressive, highly efficient timeline of approximately 18 months to get Bermudians into these homes.

**Mr. Speaker**, while the contrarians write their newspaper columns and try to cast doubt on this Government's capability, we will continue to do the tangible work of the people. We will be continuously engaging with area residents, community groups, and stakeholders every step of the way. Mr. Speaker, this Government promised to deliver affordable housing, and through partnership with our quangos, we are doing exactly that.

**Mr. Speaker**, in closing, I would like to acknowledge the sterling efforts of the team at BHC, BLMC and the Ministry of Housing and Municipalities who have been diligently managing these projects, especially Mr. Paul Martin, Mr. Andrew Dias, Mr. Keino Furbert-Jacobs, and Mr. Blake Lambert.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.