



Ministerial Statement

Bermuda's New Government – the First 100 Days and Beyond

To The House of Assembly

by

The Hon. Premier E. DAVID BURT, JP, MP

Friday, November 3, 2017

Mr. Speaker,

Our democracy is a hybrid creature; founded in the British parliamentary system and Cabinet-style Government, with a healthy dose of American benchmarks resulting from our proximity to the United States. This Government set itself a series of goals to be met within 100 days of being elected, and this pledge can trace its origins to the first administration of Franklin D. Roosevelt who took office amidst one of the most trying times for ordinary people in the United States.

Mr. Speaker,

It is with great pride that I rise today to report that since this new Government took office, we have successfully completed or significantly advanced 21 of the 21 - 100 day pledges that we made to the people of Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

The election of 2017 was a referendum on ideals and vision for this country. The people of Bermuda were presented with a clear choice. History now records that the people of this country chose a Government who would put Bermudians first; a Government who would no longer subjugate the rights and aspirations of Bermudians to the interests of the privileged few.

Mr. Speaker,

The voice of the people resonates even now in our ears as elected representatives because the sheer numbers of voters and the margin of the election victory makes the phrase “mandate for change” more than a trite political slogan; but translates into a directive for this Government to usher in a period of renewed prosperity for the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker,

These first 100 days have been trying and testing as the new government comes to grips with the enormity of the task before us. However, **Mr. Speaker**, we are equal to the task and I am pleased to advise Honourable Members and the public that these 100 days have been a success story; a story of demanding more from ourselves as public servants and a story of charting a course for this country that matches the mandate we received from the people on July 18th.

Mr. Speaker,

This government pledged to improve the standard of governance in Bermuda. Within the first 100 days, we have amended the Ministerial code of conduct to increase disclosure requirements of ministers, and today we tabled the new Code of Practice for Project Management and Procurement. The Standing Orders and Privileges Committee will submit changes to standing orders to create Premier’s Question Time, implement the SAGE Commission’s recommendation to establish three permanent Parliamentary Oversight Committees and that committee will soon ask this Honourable House to approve a Code of Conduct for Parliamentarians.

Promises made – Promises Kept!

Mr. Speaker,

The centrepiece of any modern economy’s foundation must be education. As we promised, we have put the needs of Bermudians students, young and old, to the forefront of our policy development. In order to make Bermudians employees of choice in their own country, we must provide our people with the tools required to take their place in driving this economy. This is a skills-based economy and so we have delivered on our promise to make education and training at the Bermuda College available to all.

Mr. Speaker, There have been few prouder moments thus far of my premiership than to have a parent thank me for providing the opportunity for their child to attend the Bermuda College, which would have been unlikely without this government's financial support. The actions of this government saw 188 additional Bermudian students gain access to college courses or training programs. This is 188 Bermudians who may not have had that chance to advance their education or learn a new skill, but got that chance because this PLP Government put Bermudians first. Promise Made – Promise Kept.

Mr. Speaker,

It remains a betrayal of our claims to be a modern and sophisticated jurisdiction where in 2017 we have schools without WiFi. In keeping with our 100 day promise to commence the installation of wireless internet, I can advise Honourable Members that Purvis Primary and East End Primary Schools have commenced WiFi installation and before the end of this school year, all schools will be equipped with this required technology.

To complement the SCORE Report, an assessment of the health and safety priorities for all of our public schools has been completed. We are committed to acting on the recommendations set out to ensure that our children are being educated in facilities that meet the legitimate expectations of their hard working, tax paying parents.

Mr. Speaker,

Very often, the heartbeat of our communities can be found in clubs and community centres. This government committed to do more than pay lip service to their importance and promised to extend loan guarantees for community clubs seeking to upgrade their facilities. Cabinet has approved the loan guarantee programme for community clubs and we will shortly communicate to clubs how they can take advantage of this programme which sees government at its best: working for the people who work to enrich our communities. We also pledged to build healthier communities and to that end the Ministry of Public Works has identified outdoor fitness equipment which will be installed at Astwood Park, the Arboretum, and Shelly Bay Park.

Promise made – Promise Kept.

Mr. Speaker,

As we pledged to increase job training to prepare Bermudians to fill jobs held by guest workers, this Government implemented initiatives over the first 100 days which will provide business and educational opportunities for our local entrepreneurs and tradespeople.

Mr. Speaker,

With the fee for National Certification being waived until the end of this year, the Ministry of Education and Workforce Development is committed to getting persons working in specific occupations registered and certified. To support our entrepreneurs, Cabinet has approved the doubling of the Bermuda Economic Development Corporation's capital from \$1 million to \$2 million, which will increase the flexibility of the BEDC to support local economic growth. The BEDC will also place an increased focus on cooperative economics which will be led by a director of Cooperative Economics at the BEDC.

Again Mr. Speaker, Promise Made – Promise Kept.

Mr. Speaker,

The opportunity presented by this electoral mandate is one which can make the diversification of this economy a reality. Infrastructure neutral, technology based activities are the next wave of economic development for Bermuda and this Government has taken the steps required to usher in this era for the Island. As we sit in this Honourable House, the technology marketplace is actively considering the Request for Information issued by the Ministry of Public Works for a Tech Hub.

Additionally, the Government is working aggressively to update our laws and regulations to support new waves of businesses that are emerging based on distributed ledger technologies and crypto-currencies.

Mr. Speaker,

Good ideas know no political allegiance. The stark contrasts of a political campaign must give way to a rational and pragmatic means by which to govern. Bermuda First is the fulfilment of that approach. This government has assembled the Island's keenest thinkers, the most committed men and women, and challenged them to step beyond the usual partisanship that dominates our engagement with one another. The re-establishment of Bermuda First is critical to the Government's stated aim of building a fairer and better Bermuda. Comfort zones are being abandoned and as equals, trade unionists, bankers, insurance executives and entrepreneurs will be guided by one single principle: Bermuda First.

Mr. Speaker,

It would be impossible to set about building a fairer and better Bermuda without addressing the issue of taxation. The unequal burden borne by hardworking men and women in this country demonstrates a system crying out for reform. In these first 100 days this government has established a Tax Reform Commission whose statutory mandate is to make Bermuda's system of taxation fairer and to work towards a basic principle of equity in taxation. – Promise Made, Promise Kept.

Mr. Speaker, As we knocked on doors and listened to the people of Bermuda, the illogical, and in some cases, unconscionable, prices of food and other goods was constantly mentioned. We cannot, on the one hand, promote healthy food options as means by which to improve quality of life and relieve the stresses on the system of healthcare, and yet preside over a system that makes fresh vegetables more expensive than preservative-laden snacks. This operating at cross purposes must end and I am pleased to advise this Honourable House that Honourable members will be invited this month, to consider a Bill to grant additional powers to the Price Control Commission aimed directly at reducing the cost of living in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

The high cost of living particularly impacts our seniors who struggle monthly to make ends meet. During the election we promised that we would increase seniors pensions by the rate of inflation every year, and today with the tabling of the Contributory Pensions (Amendment of Contributions and Benefits) Order 2017 - this Government has kept our word to our seniors.

Pensions will be increased this year by the rate of inflation and that Mr. Speaker is a promise that this Government is honoured to keep.

Mr. Speaker,

Public sector unions are currently at the negotiating table. A negotiating team is meeting regularly with each representative union and the mandate given to that team by this government is to re-establish confidence in the process and to do what is feasible to engender again a respect for the labour of the workers of this country.

Mr. Speaker,

To put Bermudians first, we must have an immigration system that works. This Government has established a Bipartisan Committee on Immigration Reform to collaboratively work on what has historically been divisive issue.

And, with regards to the OBA's immigration policy which removed the requirement that businesses who bring in overseas entertainers must also employ a Bermudian group at the venue at the same time, the Government is currently reviewing the immigration policy proposed by the Musicians Union. Shortly, stakeholder groups will be consulted before finalising the policy.

Mr. Speaker,

Voters told us that fresh energy was required to address the issues that directly affect them and their communities. This is especially so with respect to violence and anti-social behaviour. We have changed the conversation, Mr. Speaker. We now speak openly about the need for systemic change to address the multi-generational issues that have given rise to violence in this country. We speak of providing economic opportunities for those who this system has, by design, marginalized and condemned to the fringes of this society.

The Ministry of National Security is leading a joined-up, cross ministry effort to start at the earliest possible age to present our children and young people with alternatives to the lifestyle that has led to death, incarceration or forced emigration. We promised the voters action in our first 100 days, and with the appointment of a gang violence reduction coordinator it is just one more promise made that this government has kept.

Mr. Speaker,

It is a sad indictment of this Government's critics that they are confined to travel costs in their assessment of our performance.

Mr. Speaker,

After a blunt and overt attack on Bermuda from the Leader of the Opposition in the UK's House of Commons; after the cyber-attack on a global law firm with offices in Bermuda and after Regional devastation in other Overseas Territories, only the most small-minded of individuals would question the need for Bermuda to be present and vocal on the international stage. We travel to protect Bermuda's interests; we travel to support our athletes and cultural ambassadors; and we travel to ensure that investors and tourists always have Bermuda top of mind. Our travel is not only necessary, **Mr. Speaker**, it is vital.

Mr. Speaker,

Speaking of travel, this government is confronted with a contract for the construction and 30 year management of a new terminal at the L.F. Wade International Airport which has now been upended by the potential sale to a Chinese firm of Canadian Company Aecon.

In keeping with our promise to the people of Bermuda, this latest development and the overall arrangement are the subject of a full review. The people demanded that we examine this contract with a view to improving the deal, and this we shall do. This Government is determined to emerge from this review with a better deal for the Bermudian taxpayer to mitigate the clear privatisation efforts of the previous administration.

Mr. Speaker,

These 100 days have been an incredible period of service. It has been exciting to progress the work of meeting the expectations of the thousands of Bermudians who voted; not just those who voted for this Government, but for all Bermudians. The pace that Ministers, backbench MPs, civil servants have kept has been remarkable. This has been a true team effort and I am confident that we are poised now for the transformative change to Bermuda that we promised.

Mr. Speaker, Building a better and fairer Bermuda could never be described as a 100-day task. It is a promise that seeks to eliminate the vestiges of unearned privilege; a promise that manifests the real hopes and aspirations of people who for too long have been spectators to the success of this economy; it is a promise that demands social justice as the norm and not the hard-fought exception; it is a promise that is guided by some very simple words: Bermuda and Bermudians First.

Mr. Speaker, before I take my seat, I would like to thank colleagues in this Honourable House and the members of the civil service, for their extremely hard work over the past 100 days. Additionally, I would like to thank the members of the wider Bermuda community who have realised that the election is over and now is the time work together to grow our economy and create that better and fairer Bermuda. Our country is facing a number a significant threats from overseas, and while some in this house may be tempted to chase headlines in the daily or seek attention on social media, we must remember that it is Bermuda –vs- the rest of the world. The energy spent fighting each other can be better spent working to ensure that the policies we create are balanced and will lead to the jobs and growth that this island so desperately needs.

Mr. Speaker, While Bermuda’s new Government has made strides in the right direction with 21 out of our 21 one-hundred day pledges being completed or substantially advanced, there is still a long way for us to go. The Government will now shift its focus to delivering on the promises laid out in the Throne Speech and will work tirelessly with stakeholders to grow Bermuda’s economy and create jobs. The business community and our trade unions are responding positively, and now it is time for their political leaders to work collaboratively to advance Bermuda’s interests.

Mr. Speaker, Our task of creating that better and fairer Bermuda is underway, and our commitment to the people of Bermuda will continuously be at the forefront of everything that this Progressive Labour Party Government does.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.