



Ministerial Statement

by

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Minister of Public Works

Rescinding of the Approval for the Purchase of Sandys 360

4 June 2021

Mr. Speaker, I wish to advise the House of the rescinding of the approval granted to the Government of Bermuda to purchase from the Trustees of the Sandys Secondary School, for a purchase price of One Million Bermuda dollars for the unencumbered freehold interest of the 2.5-acres, namely lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 situated at the site of Sandys Secondary Middle School.

Mr. Speaker, let me first declare my double interest:-

1. I am an alumni of Sandys Secondary School
2. And as you will know **Mr. Speaker** – my great Aunt, Nurse Alice Scott was one of the founders of Sandys Secondary School.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that a draft purchase & sale agreement was tabled on February 23, 2018 and was debated and approved on March 5, 2018. The approval included the purchase of the Sandys 360 Sports and Aquatic Centre at 21 Broome Street Sandys.

Mr. Speaker, by way of background, the House will recall that the Trustees owed some \$9.24 million to HSBC Bank of Bermuda Limited for the construction of the Centre and were unable to repay the debt. HSBC had initially offered the debt to Government, which was ultimately declined.

Mr. Speaker, at one point, a Cabinet sub-Committee was formed to include the Attorney-General, Ministers of Public Works, Community, Culture and Sports and Education and Economic Development to look at options. This Cabinet Sub-Committee met and considered options and in the end were of the view that the Property is of such operational significance to the School and the Sandys community that Government should consider purchasing it from the Trustees.

Mr. Speaker, the Centre comprised a 25-meter indoor pool, basketball court/hall, gymnasium, and gym classrooms. The mission of the Centre was "*to strive to create healthy and positive young people, adults, seniors and families through the community, by providing a gathering place and a full range of programmes in education, sport, aquatic, health and recreation, via a campus-based community centre. The facility also focuses on community development, serving as a hub for the community.*"

Mr. Speaker, since March 2018, the Government has worked tirelessly to advance the sale, but the Trustees' lawyers and HSBC have not been able to agree

on the final dollar amount since there was an outstanding debt with a contractor (BC&M McAlpine) that had not been satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, this outstanding matter continuously delayed the advancement of the sale and given the current economic climate; it has been determined that it is in the best interests of the Government to rescind the purchase approval.

Mr. Speaker, I also would like to acknowledge the long and proud history of the School which was founded in 1927 by community members as the first secondary school open to black students living in the west end. The property was donated by generous community-minded individuals who wished to ensure equal access to secondary education to black students.

While we do not take this decision lightly – after 3 years of trying – the economic climate is a lot different than 3 years ago and so the Government makes this decision with regret but in the belief that it is the right thing to do.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.