



## **Revival of the CyberTips Programme**

**Presented by:**

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**Ministry for the Cabinet Office and Digital Innovation**

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**Mr. Speaker,**

Today, I rise to speak about an issue that touches every family in Bermuda. The digital world is now a central part of how our children live, learn, and connect. It is where they build friendships, explore ideas, and express who they are. It also brings new risks and challenges that previous generations did not face in the same way.

This is not simply a story about screen time or technology. It is about ensuring that our children are safe, confident, and prepared to thrive in a world where digital life is part of everyday life. Across the world, we see increasing concerns about cyberbullying, harmful content, misinformation, and the use of personal data. At the same time, we know that digital tools open up powerful opportunities for learning, creativity, and future employment.

Our responsibility is not to fear this world, nor to ignore it. We must equip our children, support our families, and ensure the right protections are in place. That is why today I am announcing the relaunch of the CyberTips Programme.

**Mr. Speaker,**

We are at a defining moment in our island's digital evolution. Bermuda is moving forward and embracing a future defined by fintech progress, digital growth, new industries, and new opportunities. But while we look at the big picture of progress, something else is quietly happening in our homes and schools. Our

children are growing up in a digital world that is moving faster than the systems around them, and we are now seeing the impact of that.

The *Bermuda Adolescent Mental Health and Wellness Report 2023*, which surveyed over **2,500 students**, found that nearly one-third of our young people, **31.3 per cent**, are experiencing moderate to severe depression. Over **25 per cent** are dealing with anxiety. These figures are not just alarming; they are higher than the global averages.

**Mr. Speaker,**

When we look deeper, we see how the digital world shapes how they feel, how they see themselves, and how they cope. We see long hours on screens. As Minister Furbert recently told this house, we have learned that in our primary schools, **61 per cent** of students spend more than five hours a day on screens. Even more concerning, **78 per cent** of parents report that this time is entirely unmonitored.

Limited supervision is not due to lack of care, but to parents adjusting to new challenges they didn't face growing up. Children use devices to escape, affecting sleep and self-esteem.

CyberTips is returning, not just as a website, but as a national digital safety network. Digital threats may be invisible, but they are just as harmful. We are developing a practical, supportive program that meets families' needs without overwhelming or judging parents.

**Mr. Speaker,**

CyberTips is about helping people make better decisions in a world that is not slowing down. We have a two-pronged approach to this relaunch.

### **1. Supporting Parents and Families**

The first prong focuses on parents. Many parents feel unsure, even powerless, when it comes to the digital lives of their children. We want to change that. We want parents to understand the risks and their rights.

For example, I want every parent in Bermuda to know that our Personal Information Protection Act, or PIPA, specifically Section 16, prohibits any

digital program from collecting data on a child under 14 without verifiable written parental consent. The revived CyberTips will provide parents with the education and tools to reclaim their role as digital stewards and exercise these rights.

Most parents may not even be aware of these types of rules, but it matters that they know what tools they have to protect their children. It reminds us that parents, guardians, and caregivers are not bystanders in this space.

They have a role. They have authority. The revived CyberTips program will help them step into that role with confidence.

## **2. Supporting Children and Young People**

The second prong focuses on our children. We will not do this by restricting them from the world they live in, but by preparing them for it. We will equip them with the knowledge and judgement they need to:

- Protect their privacy and understand their digital footprint.
- Recognise harm, whether it is bullying, manipulation, or misinformation.
- Question what they see online and make thoughtful choices.
- Think before they post, understanding that what they do online can follow them into the future.

This is about building confidence, not just caution. We want our young people to participate safely and make the most of the opportunities available to them.

### **Mr. Speaker,**

I have also met with some parents who advocate for total bans on smartphones or to remove access to social media altogether until a certain age. I fully understand and respect these personal choices. It comes from a place of care. I have committed to ensuring that their voices are heard and that these options remain available for parents to consider.

Our role as a Government is not to make that choice for every family. Our role is to ensure every family can make that choice with a full understanding. Some will choose limits. Others will choose guidance. What matters is that those decisions are informed. We want to provide education that helps children and parents use

technology wisely rather than fear it. We must prepare our students for a workforce that requires high-level digital skills so they are not disadvantaged in the global economy.

**Mr. Speaker,**

As the CyberTips programme develops, it will grow with the world around it. We are already talking with partners to discuss how to introduce training for emerging technologies. This includes using tools like artificial intelligence ethically, checking their accuracy, and protecting privacy. We want Bermudians not just to use these tools, but to understand them, to question them, and to use them responsibly. We want Bermudians to be the masters of AI, not its passive subjects.

We also have a longer-term goal to establish a new standard for our community organisations across Bermuda. We want to introduce a CyberTips-trained approach that works with schools, organisations, and community groups. This will lead to a certification for organisations that work with children.

When a parent sends their child to a daycare, a sports club, or an after-school program, this certification will show that the organisation has put in place safe online practices. It will show that their staff are trained to recognise the red flags of digital harm. Parents will know that the people responsible understand digital risks and are equipped to respond to them. This provides reassurance that support is not limited to the home but is shared across the community.

**Mr. Speaker,**

This is not just a programme. This is a shift in how we think about digital life. We must recognise that the online world is not separate from real life but part of it. If we want to protect our children, we must meet them where they are. We must meet them with guidance, clarity, and care. This is about the minds of our children. This is about their confidence, their sense of self, and their future.

Reviving CyberTips is about making sure that as Bermuda moves forward, we do not leave our children and parents to navigate this alone.

We want a future where children are not only protected online, but confident in navigating it. We want parents to feel informed, not overwhelmed. We want our communities to be equipped to respond to new challenges with clarity and care.

As Bermuda continues to set the pace in progress, we must be mindful to build a community where digital advancement is matched by digital responsibility.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker**.