



## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### TO THE SENATE

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MINISTER OF YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

### RE-IMAGINING BERMUDA DAY AND HERITAGE MONTH

25<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Madam President**, Bermuda had a sobering anniversary last week, as March 18<sup>th</sup> marked the one-year anniversary of the first Covid-19 case in Bermuda. A year later, we are not yet out of the woods as we continue to grapple with the impacts of this virus. However **Madam President**, human beings are nothing if not adaptable; and in the lead-up to Heritage Month, it's worth reminding my fellow citizens that agility – the ability to note the tides and trends, and then to quickly adjust and change course accordingly – is not just a Bermudian talent; it's our birthright.

**Madam President**, this national characteristic is embedded deeply in our history as Bermudians; and beyond the historical

lessons that we've been taught in school and that we've learned from our own reading, most Bermudians will have also learned the lessons of agility, nimbleness, and inner strength from our families.

Listening to the stories of our parents and grandparents who came before us, and learning from the example they've set of how to persevere in the face of challenges, is part of our upbringing. And **Madam President**, although the specific circumstances of this past year of pandemic were unique, the application of these lessons is an essential ingredient in seeing us through this crisis to the other side.

**Madam President**, it is for this reason that the theme for Bermuda Day and Heritage Month this year is, appropriately, "**Bermudian Resilience**". Resilience is at the heart of how we have managed to withstand the difficulties of this pandemic as a people, and how we will navigate the challenges to come.

**Madam President**, last year's Bermuda Day and Heritage Month was one like no other; we had just emerged from shelter-in-place, and there was still much that was unknown about the

Covid-19 virus. **Madam President**, you may recall that in lieu of our traditional Bermuda Day Parade, we instead worked with Bermemes to produce an entirely virtual experience, intended to lift the spirits of our community despite the physical distancing requirements that were in place for our safety.

Since that time, the Department of Culture has exerted and exemplified this spirit of resilience and agility. At the beginning of the pandemic, the Department quickly changed their operational model in order to produce a plethora of excellent virtual and digital content. Once more was known about the virus, the Department pivoted to the current hybrid model of delivery that illustrates how we can still gather, albeit in reduced numbers, in ways that are quite safe and minimise the risk of disease transmission.

**Madam President**, with this in mind, I would like to share this year's plans for Bermuda Day and Heritage Month, where we have once again re-imagined the celebrations so that they can work in alignment with our current circumstances.

**Madam President,** it will come as no surprise in the midst of a pandemic that we will not be able to host our typical Bermuda Day Parade. Instead, the Department of Culture is organising a covid-safe Bermuda Day Show, to be held at the National Stadium on May 28<sup>th</sup>. The show will feature some of what we all love best on Bermuda Day including dance troupes, vibrant costumes and gombeys.

Sadly, we will once again miss out this year on the opportunity to tell our neighbours “don’t take my spot”; and of course, I am sure that a sizeable part of the population will truly be sorry not to experience the traditional parade “gap time” – perhaps I can convince our staff at the Department to find a way of incorporating it into the show!

**Madame Speaker,** there will be a limited number of tickets available to view the show in person, but it will be broadcast live to the general public and recorded for viewing later. And as a way of acknowledging the extraordinary hard work and commitment of our frontline essential workers over the past year, the in-person tickets will be reserved for Bermuda’s immunized workforce who put their lives on the line during the

roughest part of the pandemic: healthcare workers, the Police, Bermuda Regiment soldiers, grocery store workers, gas station attendants, as well as other frontline workers who have consistently carried out the labour necessary for our country to stay operational. This is a small gesture that we can offer as a “thank you” for their dedication and their Bermudian resilience.

**Madam President**, the Department of Culture is also planning to establish a new annual tradition to take place at the beginning of Heritage Month: a conference for Bermuda’s creatives, heritage organisations, artists and cultural groups – this year, to be held in a virtual format.

This will provide an opportunity not only to formally launch the National Cultural Heritage Policy for Bermuda – a throne speech initiative that I will speak to in a subsequent Ministerial Statement – but it will also afford Bermuda’s cultural community the chance to interact and brainstorm ideas around heritage preservation, creative development, challenges and opportunities posed by the pandemic, and to consider how best to support our artistic community.

Particularly as a result of the current set of challenges that face us as a country, there is much work to be done to ensure the viability and sustainability of Bermuda's creatives and heritage institutions. The staff at the Department of Culture is excited to play a role in that process, and Heritage Month is an ideal time to focus on these kinds of conversations.

**Madam President**, in addition to some of the programmes that will be hosted by the Department during Heritage Month including a continuation of our popular Creatives Live! Concert series on the steps of City Hall, we anticipate supporting, through grants and partnerships, other organisations and small businesses that wish to host Covid-safe events in May in celebration of our culture and heritage.

**Madam President**, it has been a difficult year for all. But in the lead-up to the month where we make the time to remember what it means to be Bermudian, I would encourage us all to embrace our Bermudian resilience and to take heart knowing that we will see our way through these tough times. We will emerge with an even clearer sense of who we are as a people and what's most important to us as Resilient Bermudians. As

always **Madam** President, our community has been in the past,  
and still remains, the essential ingredient.

Thank you, **Madam President**.