



Government of Bermuda
Ministry of Youth, Social Development and Seniors

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

The Hon. Tinée Furbert, JP, MP

2024 – 2025 Zone In and Zone Outs

Friday, 18th July 2025

Mr. Speaker,

As another school year has concluded, I am happy to rise today in this Honourable House to speak about the work The Office of Youth Affairs (TOYA) to ensure that this Government is responsive to Bermuda's youth. Through the Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions, TOYA has garnered feedback directly from young people who expressed their viewpoints on varied aspects of their community.

Mr. Speaker,

The growth of our young people today are different from previous generations. There are similarities, yes, they have some of the same needs, yes however, their interests are different, their responses to challenges are not the same, and their approach and expectations from life are diverse.

We cannot use the same methodology and approach we did to engage young people as we did ten or twenty years ago. We must evolve as they have.

The question then becomes, how do we best respond to their evolving needs? How do we know what their issues and challenges are that we may be most effective in supporting them?

To obtain answers to these questions **Mr. Speaker,**

One must go directly to the source. The Office of Youth Affairs understands this, which is why Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions were devised; to directly and strategically engage with young people. In these sessions, young people asked not only what their issues and concerns were but also why they feel that way and what potential solutions could be implemented.

Mr. Speaker,

The Zone-In sessions are held during the months of September and October. As Minister responsible for Youth, I travelled alongside the TOYA Youth Development Team to schools across the island at the middle, senior and tertiary levels. Our aims were to introduce the National Youth Policy Working Group members, provide updates on the goals of the National Youth Policy, while also garnering feedback on those same goals. While we did ask questions of students, they were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Mr. Speaker,

I was struck by their candidness, passion and insightfulness. I found the discussions enlightening as they discussed their school workloads and it's impact on their mental health. Conversations on the need for financial literacy and education at younger ages were inspirational as they showed understanding of the impact of such on their futures. These conversations are so very necessary. It is not enough to only provide a space for young people to express their views, we must also listen, truly hear what is on their hearts and minds, and then we must act.

Our young people demand action **Mr. Speaker.**

We heard it at the National 18+ Youth Conference in July of last year, we heard it at the Consultation 2 Conference in April of this year, and we are hearing it from young people in our schools. Young people are looking to us to act on their concerns, and we must be ready to respond.

Mr. Speaker,

Conversations like what took place are the fuel that drives The Office of Youth Affairs. They are the inspiration for the events, programmes, and workshops that the TOYA team puts together. This is the action that young people are looking for, and they can expect the TOYA team to deliver. Events like this also build trust with the younger generation, for as young people have said several times to TOYA staff and youth workers in other organisations as well, this is a generation that does not put a lot of trust in adults and it is only through our actions that we can build and re-build trust.

Mr. Speaker,

As we approached the end of the school year, before students left for the summer, the TOYA Youth Development Team left their offices once again to check in with students at their schools for Zone-Out sessions. The intention was the same: to gain feedback on the Goals of the National Youth Policy and identify any other areas of concern. Information from these conversations were used as topics of discussion at the upcoming National 18+ Youth Conference and other events.

Mr. Speaker,

I commend the students who participated in the Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions. They shared their time and unfiltered opinions with us. It is my hope that they continue to feel empowered to share their views and experiences of life in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

On behalf of myself and the Office of Youth Affairs, I want to thank the schools that participated in the Zone-In and Zone-Out Sessions over the last academic year. We appreciate them opening their doors to us, adjusting their schedules and ensuring young people were present to share their views with us. The schools that participated were:

1. Bermuda College
2. The Berkeley Institute
3. Cedarbridge Academy

4. Bermuda Institute
5. Warwick Academy
6. Bermuda High School for Girls
7. Dellwood Middle School
8. Sandy Secondary Middle School
9. Somersfield Academy
10. Whitney Institute Middle School

Mr. Speaker,

I also want to thank the TOYA Youth Development Team. They take their mantle of developing and empowering Bermuda's youth seriously, and I wish to praise them for their commitment and creativity in executing their work. Through their Zone-In and Zone-Out sessions, they are helping to create the next generation of responsible citizens who participate willingly in civic engagement activities.

Mr. Speaker,

In closing, Bermuda's youth are creative, sensitive, insightful, caring, and energetic. As a Government, we are duty-bound to help them grow into the best possible versions of their self. What that image looks like should be co-created by those who make the decisions and those who will be impacted. I am confident that by ensuring that young people and the Government work together can create the best version of Bermuda.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**