

2017 **Reply to the Throne** Speech



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Delivered by the

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One Bermuda Alliance



2017 REPLY TO THE THRONE SPEECH

Mr. Speaker,

I would first like to extend my deepest appreciation to the electorate who in 2012 provided the One Bermuda Alliance with the opportunity to serve them as government. While our term was fraught with challenges during the past four and a half years, exacerbated in part by the incompetence of the prior PLP administration which resulted in a mammoth financial hole from which the country had to climb, we did have many successes and launched initiatives that the new administration can build upon.

The One Bermuda Alliance, now the Official Opposition, extends our congratulations to the Progressive Labour Party on their success at the polls during the recent election.

We have committed to working along with the Government, and to afford them support for those programmes and policies that are deemed to be for the better good of the country, a courtesy that was exhibited infrequently while they were in opposition.

I wish to extend my congratulations to the hard-working colleagues on both sides of the aisle who worked to gain the trust of their constituents and to win their seats. Equally, within the Westminster system of governance, where there is a winner, there is also an aspiring candidate who fell short. Unsuccessful candidates deserve appreciation for their efforts in engaging their constituents and advancing the democratic process in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker,

Our responsibility today is to respond to the Throne Speech, delivered last Friday, which was short on real solutions and long on studies. Government has said their Throne Speech outlines a vision for the future, but a vision without a plausible plan is merely a dream. Governments must be doers, not dreamers. The tenor of the speech suggests that government has either purposely elected to disregard the country's tenuous economic position or has chosen to continually misrepresent the achievements of the former OBA government.

Rev. Jamaine Tucker, in delivering the opening prayer, quoted Charles Spurgeon's sentiment that "A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes"

In the opening statement the government boasted of their numeric advantage. With so many additional personnel, we trust that the backbench will be able to hold the administration to a level of accountability that was deficient during the previous PLP administration.

This deficiency was made manifest in the relentless pursuit of power by the PLP Opposition which denigrated the entire political process to a level perhaps unprecedented in Bermuda politics, resulting in their leader being subject to the criticism from his own membership that he operated with subterfuge and deceit.

Mr. Speaker,

It is unfortunate that the same approach is being perpetuated through the Throne Speech in an attempt to negate the positive things that were done for our community by the OBA administration, cynically claiming that the OBA believed in trickle down whereas the new administration will focus on a so-called 'ripple effect'. The record will show that the OBA government restored much-needed confidence in Bermuda. Due to the unprecedented debt and looming deficits created by the former PLP government, the OBA moved quickly to rein in government spending and did so without the massive layoffs seen in other jurisdictions. The OBA also focused on getting foreign investment to stimulate job growth, revitalize tourism, construction, and business opportunities as well as diversification across a range of sectors.

The reference to crumbs from the table may appeal to the PLP base, however the reality is that when the OBA assumed government, there were no crumbs, the cupboards were bare, the table and floor had been swept clean, and little, if any had been made available to the people for whom they now profess to have concern. Good governance and accountability were also in short supply, as dramatically highlighted by the Auditor General in her various reports on government operations and finances.

Mr. Speaker,

We saw the misinformation machine in full view when the stories grew like fish tales to cause the airport project to be depicted as some kind of sinister arrangement.

We heard the challenge to the Desarollos group and the untruth that they would take the beach away from St. Georgians.

We saw it yet again when the OBA government was accused of pepper spraying seniors, when it is known that constitutionally, the government neither gives direction nor orders policing policies. We saw the cowardice when the leader of the PLP encouraged through robo-calls and blast emails for protesters to attend Parliament, then some of the attendees proceeded to push seniors into the line of fire when the police department determined that law-breakers should be challenged. We therefore wholeheartedly support a committee to investigate the

occurrences of that dark and unfortunate experience that will surely highlight the substantive part played in the debacle by those now calling for an investigation.

We noted the PLP's call for civil disobedience as being an appropriate action, yet threw their hands up in disbelief when the situation they created spun out of control and resulted in physical harm to both protesters and the police.

Mr. Speaker,

We saw the vilifying of the America's Cup, an event that rejuvenated our tourism industry and helped a significant number of our people and businesses to obtain work, not for the short duration of the event, but during more than two years preceding, and the time following the event. We heard gross misinformation being perpetuated on a daily basis.

We endured the constant barrage of negativity in the formation of the Bermuda Tourism Authority and the Gaming Commission and the successful implementation of both of these institutions were a testament to the fortitude and the resolve of the OBA government.

Mr. Speaker,

It is said that politics make strange bedfellows. We will watch closely the developments of the questionable New York trip that was planned by an unlikely quartet with would be gaming operators to determine the purpose of their meeting at the Four Seasons, and the benefit to Bermuda, if any.

Mr. Speaker,

The OBA inherited a government that was mired in debt, and through its fiscal policies, brought our country back from the brink of financial disaster, setting it on a glide path to a balanced budget. Admittedly, keeping the country afloat was our preoccupation when, within very short order of our election, the Finance Minister had to borrow more money to meet the payroll. Notwithstanding the paucity of funds, the OBA administration had significant achievements:

- Advanced plans to Develop a new homeless shelter at Bishop Spencer building

- Provided property and a start-up cash grant to support the Emperial Group's mission of addressing the anti-social behaviour of some of our disenfranchised youth
- Provided Cashback for communities, \$650,000 from proceeds of crime given to dozens of community groups across the island
- Implemented Payroll tax relief for those earning \$132,000 per year or less, representing about three quarters of the labour force
- Maintained Financial Assistance at \$53.5m, double the spend in 2008/9, showing concern for unemployed or underemployed
- Enabled Reduction in Standard Health Premium
- Provided In-Home care for seniors as a Standard Health Benefit
- Stationed ambulances in the East and the West end for quick emergency response
- Worked with Belco to reduce facilities charge for low energy users
- Introduced Team Street Safe, a gang mediation programme providing support and direction for people involved in, or susceptible to gang life
- Introduced GREAT Anti-gang initiative courses
- Supported the appointment of a Bermudian Commissioner of Education
- Despite tight budget constraints, committed \$3.2 million new money for school maintenance
- Engaged in community consultation on Vision and Strategic Plan for education.
- Enacted Public Access to Information legislation to encourage Good Governance
- Cut MP's pay 10%.
- Encouraged the Endeavour programme – a legacy programme of the America's Cup team Oracle, allowing every middle school child in Bermuda to participate in a combination of STEAM and sailing
- Instituted a ministerial travel website to enable transparency
- Updated the Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation and age
- Passed the Bribery Bill

In addition, there were other highlights, such as:

- Commissioned the Fiscal Responsibility Panel to oversee government finances
- Implemented the Tourism Authority which has shown positive benefits in air and cruise arrivals, and encouraged sports tourism
- Implemented the Tourism Incentives Act

- Provided the environment to encourage hotel development at Morgan's Point, the Loren, and the St. Regis ground breaking, creating jobs for Bermudians
- Returned cruise ships to St. George's and Hamilton
- Passed Gaming legislation
- Enabled a new airport to be built, providing employment, entrepreneurial opportunities and professional development for Bermudians

Mr. Speaker,

The Bermuda government continues to live on borrowed money. The electorate is not the only people to whom the government must answer. Bermuda's creditors are expecting us to follow through with plans established by OBA administration to balance the budget by 2019 and thereupon pay down the debt. The expectation of sustained fiscal prudence is critical to continuing recovery as the government cannot wish away the immediate economic, financial and international regulatory challenges that we face as a country. Any deviations from that plan, particularly, vague and poorly defined efforts to kick the can down the road will be met with skepticism and discomfort by credit markets. It is crucial to understand that any further borrowing outside the road map already laid out will decrease our credibility in the credit markets, resulting in increased borrowing costs.

The Fiscal Responsibility Panel which meets in October will be looking for evidence that the plan is to continue the roadmap set out by OBA administration. Their report will not be swayed by local politics.

Mr. Speaker,

We note the government's immediate plan to increase personnel in the transport division, and their implication that the OBA failed to staff that department. Again, the stark reality is that this was the legacy of the previous PLP administration and the limitations on finance. Implementing the new bus schedule is an integral part of the maintenance strategy, whereby effective deployment of the buses will enable some vehicles to return to the garage and be properly serviced. It is up to the government to ensure the schedule is activated. New buses have already been budgeted for, so to fulfill the commitment to bring new buses on line is not a new challenge.

Mr. Speaker,

Despite the storms that the OBA government withstood during its term in office, and the toughness of some policies that were required based on the reckless prior

PLP administration's fiscal indiscipline, Bermuda's international reputation has been vigorously defended.

The electorate has made it abundantly clear that some of our policies were disappointing to them, and we take full responsibility and apologize for those disappointments. We note the new administration has decided to approach governance differently, and has determined that people will be better served by consultations and studies and rehashing of things that have already been completed. It is important, nevertheless, to recognize that courage to define and implement policy must be a goal for effective governance.

Mr. Speaker,

The Labour Advisory Council sub-committee, initiated under the OBA administration, not only deliberated, but just prior to the election, reported on their recommendations on the steps necessary to implement a living wage.

A further sub-committee was tasked with examining unfair immigration practices, and these reports are ready for dissemination which could alleviate the necessity to start again from square one.

Mr. Speaker,

The initiation of a Commission of Inquiry into questionable behaviour by some people closely linked to the PLP administration had its genesis in multiple reports emanating from the Office of the Auditor General. Pursuit of any questionable activity arising therefrom, if left unresolved, would undermine our CFATF review, scheduled for next year, and impose reputational risk for our jurisdiction.

Subsequent to the election, the new administration has adopted a rather "Trump-like" approach to undo many of the actions initiated under the OBA government. In respect of civil recoveries and some of the ensuing criminal investigations that have been initiated in rather high profile matters, we note the Attorney General's decision to delist at least one of these cases. Failing to recover money that legitimately belong to the people of Bermuda is a dangerous precedent, and to fail to hold to account those who have perpetrated such injustice on our people is not just unfortunate, it sets a dangerous precedent and can be interpreted as tacit approval. This hardly puts Bermudians first.

Policing, Criminal behaviour, Gang Violence and Traffic

Mr. Speaker,

As the OBA government, we committed to work on solutions to help eradicate the scourge of gang violence. Notwithstanding the constant barrage of criticism from the PLP, we are still committed to continuing to do our part to help eradicate this anti-social behaviour, as this problem falls beyond the scope Party politics.

The commitment to provide a Gang Violence Coordinator has already been undertaken; an individual was identified, and was ready to commence his duties. In accordance with its Trump-like tendencies, we would not be surprised if the government changes direction or chooses another individual to perform this function. Whatever the decision, it is imperative that the individual be engaged forthwith in order to have effective direction in this vexatious matter.

In the last House session, decriminalization of cannabis for amounts under seven grams, received a fulsome debate on a piece of very poorly drafted legislation which required several iterations to make it acceptable. We trust that the new proposed bill better reflects good legislative drafting.

Mr. Speaker,

The government has committed to creating a Police Authority, comprising Government House, government, police and laymen working together to help establish policing priorities. We will wait to see how this will evolve and trust it will not lead to covert political interference in the Police Service doing their job.

This initiative by the PLP government to establish such an Authority confirms the reality that currently, government does not interfere with policing strategy, thus the misinformation given to the public implicating the OBA government in the December 2, 2016 incident, needs to be corrected. It is very concerning that the operational independence of the police may be challenged by the new approach and this is a proposed policy that requires careful thought and further consideration. The Bermuda Constitution clearly gives the Governor the sole responsibility for internal security, so for such an authority to have any executive power needs careful consideration.

Roadside sobriety testing to combat the scourge of drink driving has been well advanced and we support its implementation.

Mr. Speaker,

We also note the promise of offering loan guarantees to clubs to allow enhancing of their infrastructure, but acknowledge that such loans would require repayment.

The government has justified this action by indicating that prior governments provided diverse guarantees for at-risk banks (we believe it was only one bank) and hotel construction. The guarantees undertaken did not have a charge against the consolidated fund, and in the case of hotel construction, providing those guarantees assisted in the creation of jobs.

The OBA policy of giving cash back to communities that is derived from proceeds of crime, which has benefitted many organizations, would have a far less burdensome impact on clubs, and we believe is worthy of continuance.

Mr. Speaker,

The government has promised to eliminate conscription. The OBA administration ended the annual conscription process, and the Royal Bermuda Regiment was successful in attaining a fully voluntary intake for the 2017 recruit camp for the first time in its history. We believed it be prudent to maintain a conscription option in the event of national emergencies should the numbers fall short, in order to truly enable safety and security of our people should the need arise.

Finance:

We are fully supportive of the introduction of regulations for debt collection agencies and their aggressive practices.

Former Finance Minister Bob Richards has spoken several times concerning the unhelpful practices of some financial institutions in not assisting consumers when they are in need, and their attitudes of working against access for people to be able to finance their legitimate aspirations. We look forward to hearing the proposals that the government may be considering.

Mr. Speaker,

The new government has promised to release the Caribbean Region Technical Assistance Center tax report for public scrutiny. Contrary to insinuations by this government, there is nothing sinister in this report and it is pleasing to note that all the recommendations included therein, with the exception of V.A.T., have already been implemented.

The government says it will increase outreach around the globe by staffing the now defunct Washington DC office and increasing engagement with the European Union in Brussels to ensure that Bermuda's interests are represented as the UK leaves the EU.

Mr. Speaker,

It is the Opposition's contention that there is little to be gained by the expense of staffing a DC office. We believe it more appropriate to retain an experienced DC lobbying firm and continuous outreach by senior government officials speaking directly to appropriate congressional people on Capitol Hill. Close coordination with ABIR is critical in this instance.

We would much prefer to see that energy and resources invested in immediate concern and action of going to Brussels, Paris and London to keep Bermuda off the black list that threatens our very existence. The PLP government has failed to consider the urgency and thus far, has demonstrated a dangerously lackadaisical approach to addressing it.

Mr. Speaker,

The government referred to the 2012 Code in respect of Project Management and Procurement that was left by the former PLP administration. It was determined that the procurement process required a stand-alone Act to address some legal issues inherent in that 2012 code.

All contracts over \$50,000 (changed to \$100,000), after recommendation by OPMP, were required to be approved by the OBA Cabinet, and during this oversight process, it was a prerequisite for obtaining approval that the successful company had demonstrated a commitment to hiring Bermudian employees.

The OBA looks forward to examining the new code to ensure that the legal concerns have been alleviated.

Health Care:

It was important for affordability and sustainability of our Health Care system to ensure that the Health Council implemented effective oversight. We harmonized the cost of Future Care premiums, and achieved a reduction in the Standard Premium Rate for the first time in nearly thirty years. This was achieved by careful consideration of high-priced technology importation and limits on reimbursement of certain diagnostic charges. We implemented the STEP programme to encourage exercise and the ensuing benefit that contributes to wellness, and embarked on an aggressive healthy eating advertising promotion.

We supported the opening of the privately-funded Radiation Treatment Centre at the Cancer and Health facility and support the government's promise to legislate coverage for these services for clients on HIP and Future Care.

Mr. Speaker,

We do note however, the promise of a review of health care with the intended purpose of extracting savings throughout the entire system. We doubt that this can be achieved unless there is critical oversight coupled with legislated restrictions on self-interested behaviour, in keeping with international standards. The Health Council membership, initiated by the PLP under their previous administration and deemed worthy of continuance by the OBA government, is in the process of being reconstituted. We heard a call from some medical doctors that the Council should be overseen only by members of the profession, and suggest that any new appointments carefully consider the interests of the allied professions.

Further, we support the advancement and employment of Bermudians in the healthcare system to ensure that Bermudians who are qualified for positions in healthcare, such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, etc., are given every opportunity to be successfully employed. We must ensure that we continue with the registration of internationally qualified medical providers to provide care on island for our residents at the highest level of care possible for the best outcomes possible and to maintain care at home wherever possible.

The OBA government also advocated for incentives for local construction companies and developers to build senior care facilities and to renovate existing ones. There is little mention of our seniors' population in the Throne Speech, but we in the OBA will not permit our treasured assets to be a neglected and forgotten segment of our population.

The OBA government began implementation of new protections through work on changes to the Senior Abuse Register, nursing home regulations and formation of an office akin to a Public Guardian. We enabled Personal Home Care as part of standard benefit, thereby helping elderly and home bound patients to receive care in familiar and comfortable surroundings, and to save money. We also implemented a 5% pension increase in 2016.

Immigration and Labour:

Mr. Speaker,

According to the Throne Speech, the government, working in tandem with the Department of Immigration, the Department of Workforce Development and stakeholders, will conduct industry-wide skills and needs assessment to identify areas where unemployed or underemployed Bermudians can be trained to fill or be promoted into jobs currently held by non- Bermudians.

Much of this work has already been completed by the National Training Board through its work on the National Training Plan, which was developed under the OBA administration. The second, more substantive implementation plan was

ready for dissemination, but for one small tweak which we trust will be completed and utilized for quick implementation.

Occupational Pension:

We note the proposed update to pension legislation to require equal treatment for Bermudian and expatriate workers, while also updating labour legislation to ensure that labour disputes are handled more effectively and labour rights are protected.

We support levelling the playing field for employment, and while it was initially thought that the one-sided pension application, which had been in effect for many years before the OBA administration, may create a disincentive to employers, we recognize that it is important to ensure equitable treatment for our Bermudian workforce.

Passports:

The printing of passports for Bermuda residents has been assumed by Her Majesty's Passport Office, a decision taken by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office for all overseas territories. The application and renewal process has become expensive, time consuming and frustrating, and has resulted in difficulty for our people to gain uninhibited access to the United States when entering from destinations outside of Bermuda. We would encourage the government to continue to work on achieving a realistic and appropriate solution to address this challenge.

Immigration Reform:

The PLP government has committed to a consultative process for immigration reform and the establishment of a bi-partisan committee to overhaul the 1956 Act, as amended. For over a year, there has been a similar committee that has worked to fulfil the terms of engagement established between the Immigration Reform Action Group and the OBA government.

Part of their work relating to adoption of children has been completed and committed to legislation, while the matter concerning mixed status family has advanced with significant public consultation and gathering of statistical data to conclude a position.

We trust that the government will allow this work to continue and to show sensitivity for children, families and persons with evidence of substantial connections to Bermuda.

Education:

Mr. Speaker,

The OBA strategic plan created a vision for education, developed by Bermudians, for Bermudians. It is based upon the core values of transparency, inclusion, engagement, and is community-driven. Accordingly, we are delighted that the PLP government will continue the work initiated by the OBA government, in regards to the new strategic planning exercise to transform the quality of education.

The OBA believes that it is right for the Government to continue to work with Bermuda College to support the trades and STEAM programmes which are internationally recognized. We also share the Government's view that programmes of this nature should also be introduced in all of the primary schools, as they are already in the middle schools and senior secondary schools.

While not surprising, it is disappointing that the government did not acknowledge that the process had already commenced for the implementation of wi-fi services to our schools.

Both of our senior secondary schools have wi-fi services, and fully functioning IT infrastructure. One middle school is fully equipped, and another middle school, has been adopted by one of our larger telecommunications companies, who has agreed to provide wi-fi at that campus, free of charge.

Further, it should be noted the OBA government had entered into an agreement with a new wireless internet company to provide wi-fi services to all of our schools. As a part of the remuneration package they would receive the rental of an arm on one of government's communications towers, and the placement of their antennae on the top of our school buildings.

Mr. Speaker,

The repairs and renovations that are sorely needed in our schools were identified in the SCORE report that was commissioned by the OBA administration. The state of disrepair was a result of years of rampant neglect predating the OBA administration, the funding has been budgeted, and we are pleased that the new administration will support addressing their neglect of our children and the crumbling infrastructure that they left.

The most radical change proposed by the PLP administration is the phasing out of the middle schools, which we have heard from them for the past nearly ten years. No education discussion should be had without ensuring that both teachers and principals are equipped with the tools to allow the best outcomes for our students.

We will await government's plan to ensure that our students have a seamless transition from Primary Schools to Secondary Schools to minimize further challenges for our students, both developmentally and academically. We suggest that the PLP consider developing and implementing a comprehensive transition process at Preschool – Primary 1, Primary 6 – Middle 1 and Middle 3- Senior 1 to align with instruction to ensure student success, and that such transition process be evidenced by the report which shows whether our students have been negatively impacted by the system, or whether there could have been better teaching engagement to ensure their success.

Business Development:

Mr. Speaker,

The government has pledged to establish an Economic Diversification Unit to include a small number of persons with a proven history of developing economies. While this programme is currently being undertaken by the Bermuda Business Development Agency, the Throne Speech is silent on whether this is government's manifestation of their controversial platform pledge to use government Pension Funds as seed money for start-up businesses. One ominous sign on this front is the recent peremptory replacement of the Chair of the Public Funds Investment Committee, the committee responsible for public pensions. We trust that the government will make known its intentions in this respect.

The pledge to transform the ACBDA (which was specifically formed for a particular major project) to the Bermuda Event Authority begs the question as to how this will work with services being provided by the Bermuda Tourism Authority.

The Incorporated Segregated Accounts (iSAC) legislation which exists in the Cayman Islands & Barbados, is a further development of the SAC legislation which was enacted in November, 2000. The further development was already under discussion with the BDA and industry sectors, and its implementation will have our full support.

The Tourism Investment Act was tabled for discussion in the last Parliament and should be easily translated to legislation and implemented. We support the continuation of these initiatives.

Government is reviewing energy proposals with a view to ensuring that Bermuda can realize the goal of reducing the cost of energy and cost of living.

We are pleased to report the progress of the OBA government on this initiative:

- Bids received, reviewed and a preferred vendor selected on a 6 Mega Watt Utility Scale PV facility at the Finger. It will provide up to 6% of Bermuda's peak demand. The very attractive cost per KWH of the bid, is significantly below the current cost of BELCO generation, and will help to reduce the overall cost of electricity to rate payers.
- A Fuels Policy Paper was completed and approved by the last OBA Cabinet to facilitate the introduction and proper regulation of existing and new fuels, such as LNG. This will provide an opportunity to reduce the cost of energy through more effective regulation and oversight.

The progress made by the OBA government in this regard would put the country in good position to maximize savings by reducing energy costs and, with the advantage of having a head start, the process can be implemented in the shorter term.

Mr. Speaker,

A most interesting observation in the Throne Speech speaks to International events in Bermuda. Had the PLP Opposition not adopted such a churlish approach to the America's Cup, or had they taken the time to discuss with their members who chose to take full advantage, they would know that unlike any event that they ever hosted in their 14 years, that event:

- Created more than 500 Bermudian jobs across a range of sectors.
- Created business opportunities for more than 80 small and large construction firms and subcontractors in setting up team bases and related projects
- Created additional income for hotels, restaurants, hospitality-related services, taxis, ferries, minibuses, wholesale, retail, marine services, shipping and forwarding, telecommunications, service providers, and real estate, to name but a few sectors positively impacted by AC35
- Accelerated the construction of Cross-Island and the renovation of many historic Dockyard buildings as a platform for future events
- Created hundreds of rentals of apartments and houses, primarily in the west end.
- Through work with the BEDC helped launch a number of small businesses

- Dramatically increased visitor numbers and spending
- Brought more than 90 superyachts to Bermuda – many for the first time.
- Exposed more than 1,500 of our school children to the Endeavour program and STEAM education.
- Spread the economic impact over 3 years, as opposed to normal brief event
- Provided Bermuda with incredible experience and credibility to attract and host other international events (e.g. World Triathlon Series WTS)
- Created the catalyst for hospitality infrastructure development
- Received extraordinary live TV exposure that we could never afford to pay for
- Provided a legacy that every Bermudian can be proud of – Bermuda was celebrated on the world stage.
- Enabled flawless execution by the ACBDA, Bermuda organizations, security services, government departments and many volunteers all working as a team, which can form the basis to bid for other international events.

Miscellaneous legislation:

Mr. Speaker,

The OBA produced Vacation Rentals Legislation which is ready for debate and we obviously support its passage.

Cyber Security Committee deliberations started over two years ago to address government's cyber preparedness and institute the National Institute of Standards and Technology framework.

Consultation and meetings already commenced with private sector to review critical national infrastructure cyber preparedness (KEMH, BELCO, telecoms, etc.) and a Cybersecurity initiative with private sector now headed by a Subcommittee of ECAB working under the former Ministry of Economic Development Department of ICT.

NIST Cybersecurity Framework Workshop previously arranged by OBA for September 20th with a visiting NIST cybersecurity manager presenting, plus panel discussions with private sector.

Missing from the legislative proposals in the Throne Speech are important matters relating to:

The bi-partisan committee which discussed and produced the report of the Boundaries Commission

Absentee Balloting which was well advanced by the OBA administration in conjunction with the Parliamentary Registrar is ready for implementation

The drafting and enactment of Super-yacht legislation to facilitate future growth in this area

Enacting Personal Information Protection Act, and facilitating the support system needed for it, and

Broadcasting Reform – part of the second phase of telecommunications reform – to facilitate the production of more local content and address discrepancies between over the air broadcast and cable regulations.

Summary:

Mr. Speaker,

In summary, this Throne Speech proposes many initiatives that were well underway. In our view, a ground zero approach to implementation is costly and time wasting. Many of the committees that have been proposed to examine topics can utilize the work already done to move to the implementation stage.

We have expressed concerns with proposed legislation with which we have reservations, and have committed our full support for those that we deem to be appropriate and which enhance the good of our people, business partners and investors.

We wish this Parliament success with its deliberations, because Parliament's success is Bermuda's success. We are committed to a collaborative approach, and trust that the pettiness of politics takes a back seat to cooperative and constructive debate.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

