



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TO THE SENATE

BY SENATOR THE HONOURABLE OWEN K. DARRELL, JP

MINISTER OF YOUTH, CULTURE AND SPORT

2023 BERMUDA DAY PARADE: A BERMUDIAN RENAISSANCE

WEDNESDAY 24TH MAY 2023

Madam President, let me begin by wishing you, our colleagues, and the whole of Bermuda a very happy Heritage Month.

Madam President, anyone who knows me on a personal level knows that Bermuda Day is absolutely my favourite holiday of the year. For years, I've kept to the tradition of watching the runners in the half-marathon derby speed past; enthusiastically enjoying the parade route and stopping along the way to catch up with friends and family; and enjoying the sights and sounds of the many dance groups, gombey troupes, floats, majorettes, music trucks and walking groups that the Bermuda Day Parade has to offer.

Madam President, I have joked with my team at the Department of Culture in telling them that they mustn't overload me with so many official duties that I miss out on my favourite part of this day: celebrating being Bermudian. They've promised to go easy on me!

But in all seriousness **Madam President**, this parade – this day – is an experience not to be missed. And in my role as the Minister responsible for Culture, I have an even deeper appreciation for all of the hard work and planning that goes into organising the parade as well as participating in the parade.

Madam President, this year's Bermuda Day and Heritage Month theme is "A Bermudian Renaissance". With this theme, we invited participants to think about what an artistic rebirth might look like and mean for our community. We captured some of this in our artwork and posters for this event, featuring singer Canjelae Taylor, visual artists Jahbarri Wilson and Yassine Chentouf, and footballers Jahni and Jahde Simmons. How might we best celebrate and support the efforts of our creative community? How do we honour the innovators amongst us?

Madam President, one of the ways that we offer this type of recognition is through the honouring of grand marshals, and I'd like to thank Milton Raposo, Ras Mykkal, Christie Hunter-Arscott, Gavin Smith, Dr. Duranda Greene and posthumously Choy Aming Sr. for their many contributions, which I encourage you to read about in our Bermuda Day booklet being published tomorrow (Thursday).

Madam President, we are also experiencing a bit of a renaissance in terms of participation, with approximately a 40% increase in participant numbers when compared with the 37 entries we had last year. This statistic is a powerful testament to our resilience, reflecting the value we place on this specific tradition which has experienced this rebound following the pandemic.

And I'm pleased to note, **Madam President,** that this renaissance has also extended to some first-time participants in the parade, including the SMS Village gombey. We are also excited that the Bermuda Powerboat Association will be showcasing boats across multiple trucks. All of these different elements will ensure that this year's Bermuda Day Parade is bursting with light, colour, music, sound, dance, costumes, regalia, and extravagant displays

of culture. This parade is about all of us as Bermudians, and is one of the best opportunities throughout our year to celebrate ourselves as a people.

Madam President, although the Department of Culture is assisted by several other stakeholders including but not limited to the Bermuda Police Service and the Department of Communications in creating the environment and overall structure for the parade to take place, the parade cannot and does not exist without participants. It was this expanded sense of gratitude toward the parade participants that caused me to want to find a way for the community to be able to better support them, since their involvement in this parade is their contribution to all of us.

This, **Madam President**, is where the Bermuda Foundation was able to assist by creating the Bermuda Day Fund, launched last month, for the purpose of charities and other community groups benefiting from having some of the costs offset for participation. This includes expenses associated with music equipment, purchase of costumes, truck rental, and float construction.

Madam President, although I will provide fulsome details about this at a later time, for now I would like to say that individual and corporate donors alike stepped up to the challenge and generously contributed so that every parade participant that applied for funding will be assisted by the Bermuda Day Fund. This is a major accomplishment, and I can't tell you how pleased I am that our community recognized the need to help and made it happen. I would like to thank the Bermuda Foundation for all of their assistance in providing a vehicle for this.

Madam President, I'd like to thank the hardworking staff at the Department of Culture, particularly Ms. Carlita Lodge who is the lead organiser of the Bermuda Day Parade. I can tell you that Ms. Lodge, who was recently recognised as a "Rising Star" in this year's Public Service Excellence Awards programme, puts in countless hours going above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that the parade is safe, successful, inclusive, and enjoyable for audience and participants alike.

Madam President, it is my sincere wish that no matter how anyone chooses to enjoy the holiday on Friday, it must be done in a way that is safe; and so please take care of yourself and others.

Madam President, I believe in my heart that it's both an honour and a privilege to be a Bermudian; and so I celebrate all that we are and what we have built together as a people. **Madam President,** I wish you and your loved ones a wonderful Bermuda Day filled with fun, fellowship, and community spirit.

Thank you, **Madam President.**