



SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

ON THE OCCASION OF THE
CONVENING OF PARLIAMENT

DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR
FRIDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2006



2006 SPEECH FROM THE THRONE

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

King Whitney Jr. wrote:

“Change has a considerable psychological impact on the human mind. To the fearful it is threatening because it means that things may get worse. To the hopeful it is encouraging because things may get better. To the confident it is inspiring because the challenge exists to make things better.”

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

Many wise Bermudians have lamented Bermuda's motto, “Quo Fata Ferunt,” where the fates may lead us or whether the fates carry [us], and have remarked that the time has come to chart our own fate, our own destiny and our own future.

Whilst the fates may have treated many of us very well over time, there are some who have not shared in Bermuda's long record of success and prosperity and are now faced with challenges that must be addressed in a meaningful way.

This, the third Progressive Labour Party Administration will serve the people of Bermuda with all the strength, energy, enthusiasm and ability that God has bestowed upon them.

The Government has a vision for a more prosperous Bermuda, one that includes all of the people of Bermuda.

In the upcoming Parliamentary Year, the Government will implement new, strong and significant programmes to address **housing, education, healthcare, the quality of life for our youth and our elderly, alcohol and drug abuse, crime and race relations.**

In order to emphasise its commitment to action, **the Government has established a Ministry for Social Rehabilitation**. This new Ministry will be focused on quickly implementing solutions to the challenges that exist in our community.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

Every Bermudian should reasonably expect to have a safe and adequate place in which to live. In the 2005 Speech from the Throne, the Government committed to producing 330 units in 30 months. Exactly 12 months later, **286 units are under contract with more to come**.

Ten homes at Morgan's Point and Beacon Hill in Somerset have been completed and are now occupied. Forty-three former Canadian Hotel residents have been housed at the recently renovated emergency facility at Southside. Six of the 11 cottages at Southside have been purchased. The 16 completely refurbished Anchorage Villas project will be completed by December 31st. The 110-unit Harbour View Village lottery-winner project is in progress and the 96-unit Loughlands project will break ground before Christmas.

The Government will work with **the private sector to generate progressive ways to finance new homes and encourage Bermudian landlords to get abandoned houses and empty apartments back into livable condition and on the market for sale or rent**.

In addition to tackling the problems of building and financing new affordable housing, the Government will assemble the best legal and financial minds to determine how to renovate derelict homes for rent or ownership by deserving families.

To support the provision of housing for certain Government housing units, the Government will introduce an **income-based housing programme** so that rents for means-tested residents will be largely calculated as a percentage of total family income. One such development will involve the construction of at least 100 affordable rental units on Ireland Island. These units will in the first instance be offered to the current tenants of houses at Albert Row and Victoria Terrace which are badly in need of renovation. The remaining 76 units will be allocated to registered applicants of the Bermuda Housing Corporation.

To provide incentives for contractors, the Government will **amend the Customs Tariff Act** to provide a zero rate of Customs Duty on imported materials for all proposals approved by the Government as ‘affordable housing developments’.

The Government will implement **Crack House legislation** to create powers to close residential and commercial premises that are used for drug dealing or drug use. These powers will also be used for the rehabilitation and re-use of those premises.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

The Government has built a beautiful edifice for the education of our children. It is a building that would be the envy of any country in the world. The Government will now shift the focus from “concrete and glass” to “teaching and learning”.

Recognising that our teachers are on the frontline in education, the Government will utilise their expertise to address the challenges faced by our young people. **Discussions with teachers will go beyond pay and benefits and focus on motivating our young people so that they all reach their full potential.**

There will be **renewed focus on the basics – reading, writing, math and critical thinking. Local national standards based on the best international standards will also be established** to allow for the measurement of progress at various stages of our children’s education.

Technical Courses at the senior secondary school level will be expanded to graduate students with skills and certificates in Carpentry, Construction, as well as Electrical, and Electronics Systems.

An Agricultural and Educational Outreach Programme will be implemented to familiarise senior secondary school students with farming activities and to expose them to the benefits to be derived from arable land and the options available in this industry.

A Fishing Apprenticeship Scheme will be implemented to expose young Bermudians to the local and offshore commercial fishing industry.

A **Student Job Skills Training Programme** will be introduced and conducted after school and on Saturdays to ensure that our youth have the necessary skills to enter the workforce. This programme will assist 14- to 16-year-olds to attain skills to acquire jobs during the summer months.

The Government will introduce a 14-week **Paid Internship Programme** to enable our young people to gain entry level jobs in the construction and hospitality industries, and other fields of opportunity.

To enhance training and employment opportunities for Bermudians, the Government will require **employers in some job categories to hire a minimum number of trainees or apprentices** in order for that employer to qualify for work permits.

The Government will design **parenting programmes** to give parents advice and support to raise school-aged children.

To provide opportunities for our young people to interact with positive role models, the Government will introduce a **“Rising Stars” programme**. This programme will celebrate high achievers in various professions from both Bermuda and abroad, and provide our young people with opportunities to interact with them in order to understand how they reached the top of their profession.

The Government will also **devote time, energy and financial support to sports and invest in the largest competitive sport in Bermuda, – Football.**

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

The health and wellbeing of the people of Bermuda are critical to the continued success of our Island.

Recent discussions have focused on the proposed location for a new hospital. The Government will shift the focus from where the new hospital will be and **work with the medical community to establish the priorities for healthcare in Bermuda**. Only after it is determined what services the hospital should deliver can costs, location or other decisions be made.

The Government will move to **abolish the so-called “Indigent Care” clinic at the hospital**. Bermudians lacking financial means will no longer have their dignity undermined as a prerequisite to accessing basic and necessary healthcare.

To highlight the benefits of preventative care, the Government will embark on a campaign to **encourage positive lifestyle changes, including weight loss, smoking cessation, healthy eating habits, and physical exercise**.

To provide a unifying vision and set of physical, social and mental goals to achieve a healthy Bermuda, the Government will implement a **National Health Promotion Strategy**.

Improved Dental Hygiene Services will also be offered to Bermuda’s Senior Citizens and an **Elder Abuse Register will be established**. The Register will allow organisations to scrutinise potential employees to determine whether or not they have a record involving the abuse of seniors.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

The people of Bermuda must talk openly and frankly about race and race relations and the debilitating effects of racism and racist practices of our past and present. This community deserves and will get an open, honest, frank and sustained discussion on race. The Government will develop **a healthy way to confront the pernicious deeds of the past and present in order to embrace the promise of the future**.

The Government will create **programmes to empower the disadvantaged** to give them a chance for a fair fight for their futures – a fair fight for jobs, businesses, land and opportunity.

To determine who is not sharing in Bermuda’s economic success; the Government will **establish an official poverty line or low-income threshold for Bermuda**.

The Government will bring a Resolution to Parliament to **declare the Economic Empowerment Zone in North Hamilton as an ‘approved scheme’ under the Industrial Development Act 1968**. As a result, new and existing businesses in the Zone will be granted tax advantages and other concessions.

The Government will initiate a **Construction Industry Training Workshop** which will be jointly developed by the Department of Corrections, Bermuda College and the West End Development Corporation. Its principal objective will be to equip inmates with the basic skills to enable them to gain a foothold in the construction industry once released from prison.

The Government will also initiate a **Joint Venture with the West End Development Corporation** for inmates with appropriate skills to assist in the redevelopment of the Casemates project. Inmates will utilise their skills in a positive manner while being provided an opportunity to support themselves financially.

An Incentives and Earned Privileges Regime will be introduced to increase inmates' participation in the wide range of educational and rehabilitative programmes available in our Correctional Facilities.

The Government will also provide **Separate Accommodation for Participants in the Work Release Programme** at the Prison Farm Facility. This will contribute to the rehabilitation of inmates and engender a sense of trust and responsibility prior to their release.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House,

The Government will **assess the entire criminal justice system – from infraction to incarceration and all that lies between.** Real change will occur to improve our laws, our prosecutorial prowess; our Customs search procedures, and our correctional system. Bermuda must increase the fairness of our criminal justice system, while starkly reducing the rate of recidivism so that those who have earned a second chance are given a fair opportunity to use it.

The Government will also develop **legislation prohibiting certain behaviours associated with gang activity in Bermuda** and amend the **Criminal Code 1907** to permit the Crown to be the complainant in serious assault cases where the victim refuses to complain.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

The scourge of drug and alcohol abuse undermines the social fabric of any society. To reduce drug abuse and its resultant impact on the most vulnerable in our community, the Government will strengthen its focus on the eradication of drugs.

The Government will establish a **National Drug Information Network** that will act as the information arm of the National Steering Committee for Drugs. All drug related matters or issues identified as needing further action will be addressed through this network.

There will be increased emphasis on the principles of community participation through the **Parishes Achieving Change Together (PACT) programme** which will see its expansion across Bermuda.

To ensure continuity of care and treatment of drug addicts, the Government will establish **a facility to accommodate both male and female residential treatment programmes**. This facility will ensure uninterrupted service delivery and enhanced programme oversight; as well as increasing the availability of critical treatment resources for the community.

A **Drugs Strategy for Inmates** will also be developed and implemented by a team of Correctional Officers and professionals from within the local community.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

The continued success of International Business in Bermuda is vital to our national interests and to our economy. The Government and businesses will continue to dialogue and work together.

The Government will convene a **Council of Economic Advisors** made up of representatives from leaders of industry, local businesses, and the Cabinet. The Council will engage in continuous, constructive dialogue geared toward making Bermuda a better place to work, reside and play, while also preserving those attributes that contribute to the overall success of our economy and our unique identity.

The Government will also keep Bermuda's business environment abreast of competitive trends through **amendments to the Companies Act 1981** and related business legislation.

A new statute titled the **Investment Funds Act** will modernize Bermuda's framework for the regulation of Collective Investment Schemes. The new framework will provide for a new classification structure, the licensing of fund administrators, the codification of minimum licensing criteria and also update enforcement powers to align with the rest of the Financial Services Sector.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

The Government will **continue the move towards the development of destination resorts** where the discerning visitor will visit, and where those who want to be with the discerning visitor will visit as well.

The Government will create programmes that attract increased numbers of leisure, business and group travelers to Bermuda and seek new airline routes, cheaper airline tickets, and expand the success of the golf and spa season.

The Government will **also put resources into our golf courses** and ensure that no tourism efforts are defeated by negative visitor experiences.

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly,

As a country with limited land mass, we must be conscious of our Island's limits and aware of how our lifestyles impact on these limits.

Although an unpopular subject, **the Government will limit the increase of cars on our beautiful island and investigate alternative means of transport: increased buses and mini-buses, expanded**

public transport routes, car pooling schemes, car usage schemes, water taxis and infrastructure improvements that are more walker-friendly.

To secure our water supply **Government has recently increased its water production and storage capacity with a new 115,000 gallon per day Containerized Seawater Reverse Osmosis Plant**. To ensure that the next generation has a secure water supply, this initiative will be coupled with a **public education campaign to encourage water efficiency and conservation**.

To address the Island's waste management issues, a new **Recycling Plant** will be opened, ensuring that a percentage of our waste will be reused. The Government will also launch an **Educational Campaign** to encourage greater public responsibility for recycling.

Bermuda is at a critical period in her development. The need for a new hospital and new means of transport has been highlighted, but there is also the causeway, garbage disposal, sewage treatment and land reclamation at the Bermuda International Airport. **The Government will resolve these and other issues that will impact our quality of life for generations to come.**

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

Although financial resources are required to support the various Government programmes outlined today, the Government will be prudent with the public purse in order to preserve our financial ratings and international integrity.

It is important that Bermuda remain fiscally prudent but well-positioned to meet the infrastructure challenges of the present as the Government prepares for Bermuda's dynamic and prosperous future.

Bermuda is a unique Island. She is constitutionally advanced, economically sound and politically stable. Her people are resourceful, intelligent and capable of overcoming any challenge.

The Government has laid out a framework for moving the country forward. This Government intends to work quickly, energetically and tirelessly to deserve the confidence, support, and trust of all the residents of Bermuda.

In 1857, Frederick Douglas wrote:

"If there is no struggle there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom and yet deprecate agitation...want crops without plowing up the ground, they want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.... Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Mr. President and Members of the Senate,

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Honourable House of Assembly,

Bermuda's greatest resource is its people, and a cohesive and fair society is essential to Bermuda's quality of life. As your Governor I want to emphasise that this means that each of us on this island must value the contribution made by each other, regardless of race, or gender, or age, or country of origin. There is no place in the modern Bermuda for prejudice or discrimination on any grounds. All parts of this community must now move forward together. I look forward to working with the Government to that purpose.

Sir John Michael Medlicott Vereker, KCB

Governor and Commander-in-Chief

Hamilton

Bermuda

3 November 2006