



Premier of Bermuda

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

TEMPORARY RELOCATION OF THE CABINET OFFICE

By:

The Hon. Michael H. Dunkley, JP, MP

Premier of Bermuda

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Good Morning:

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to provide an update on the work that needs to be done at the Cabinet Office. This work will require a temporary relocation of the Office. Honourable colleagues will be aware that the Cabinet Office, located at 105, Front Street Hamilton was designed in 1837 and first opened in 1884.

Today there are three buildings on the Cabinet Office grounds. Operationally, the main building is considered the center of Bermuda government. It houses the Office of the Premier, the Secretary to the Cabinet, the Deputy Head of the Civil Service and all related administrative officers.

Mr. Speaker, staff located at this site are engaged in coordinating initiatives on cross-cutting issues; acting as the corporate headquarters for Bermuda's public service; and providing services, advice, and guidance for other government departments and by extension the wider public.

Mr. Speaker, the building, now more than 230 years old has been maintained well throughout the years. However as with all older buildings it requires ongoing maintenance and upgrades. From time to time upgrades to older buildings tend to be more invasive.

Planned renovations for the Cabinet Office building have been deferred over the years however it has now become necessary to complete the renovations to satisfy health and safety requirements as well as deal with the building leaks and decaying windows.

To this end, **Mr. Speaker**, the main building, which also houses the Upper House, will be closed for renovations effective Friday, June 3rd, 2016.

Some Honourable Members will recall the occasion of the 2014 Speech from the Throne when inclement weather resulted in the proceedings being moved to the Senate Chamber. On that occasion arguably nearly as much rainwater made its way inside as fell outside.

Mr. Speaker, works are long overdue and will be carried out with respect to the historical significance and listing of the building. The works will include replacement of the wooden windows. The new windows will be manufactured locally to match the existing windows.

Also, the exterior of the building will be sealed and painted, highlighting its architectural features. Internally, in addition to repairs to the plaster and wood work, electrical, plumbing, heating ventilation and air-conditioning upgrades will be undertaken if required. The building will be tented to address termite infestation and final cosmetic changes will result in the replacement of carpets and drapes.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of the works will be completed by tradesmen in the Department of Public Lands & Buildings supported by private sector vendors who have the skills and experience to carry out the work. Cabinet has approved a contract to BS&R Group Ltd for the manufacture of windows for \$240,505.92.

The windows have been made and are ready to install. Cabinet has also approved a contract to Kaissa for \$67,000 for the exterior painting with a stucco finish which has a 15-year warranty.

The total project is expected to take several months to complete. The advancement of this work at this time follows a series of assessments.

While it was originally anticipated that this work could be completed without relocation of the Office, a February 2016 air quality assessment revealed elevated levels of carbon monoxide, high internal humidity and toxic molds in various areas of the building. Further, damaged floor tiles in the basement tested positive for asbestos.

The contaminated basement area was immediately sealed in accordance with the Occupational Safety & Health Act 1982. The Health Department then conducted an assessment and directed that all staff be removed from the building. Steps were immediately taken to identify an alternate site from which to operate.

Meanwhile, **Mr. Speaker**, the Secretary to the Cabinet, in his capacity as employer, received a Notice of Contravention, issued in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1982, Sections 14 – 17 by the Occupational Safety and Health Office, dated 12th May, 2016 affirming the requirement to vacate the building.

To this end, the Cabinet Office will relocate to Innovations House, 46 Reid Street Hamilton, and effective June 6th, 2016. Arrangements to relocate the Upper House are currently being considered by the Speaker of the House who will update the public in due course.

It is expected that the asbestos abatement will commence immediately upon the relocation of the Cabinet Office Team. This work will be followed by building renovations.

The Cabinet Office will endeavor to provide more information on this temporary relocation to the public and to the Members of this Honourable House as plans are finalized.

Thank you **Mr. Speaker**.