BERMUDA BRANCH

CPA Parliamentary Strengthening Seminar

1st & 2nd May 2019

Opening Remarks

By

Speaker The Hon. Dennis P. Lister, JP, MP

Secretary-General, Mr. Akbar Khan, President of the Senate, the Hon. Senator Joan Dillas-Wright, Madam AG the Hon. Senator Kathy Simmons, Opposition Leader the Hon. Craig Cannonier, visiting Speakers the Hon. Shirley
Osborne & the Hon. Dr. Anglu Farrugia, Deputy Speaker the Hon. Derrick Burgess, Members of Parliament and Senators; visiting Clerks Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Mieguel & Mr. Paul Bèlisle, Madam Clerk and staff of the legislature,

Good morning and welcome to the Parliamentary Strengthening Seminar which is the first time such a session has been held for our Legislators in Bermuda. This seminar is by no means an attempt to single out any one Member or highlight particular behaviours. By our nature, as parliamentarians, we look forward to the back and forth, cut and thrust of a good debate. However, this conference room is not Parliament, this is not the arena for a good political debate.
So why are we here? Is a question you may be asking yourself. Let me answer by saying these types of seminars are normally held shortly after an election as an orientation for new Members. Yes, we are long past the honeymoon of an election, which in itself is a plus because we can use this as an opportunity for self-assessment. It is for the good of each of us, and the country we serve to enhance how we conduct ourselves as legislators within our respective Chambers and in public.

This seminar is an example of the many benefits that are available to Parliaments within the Commonwealth. It's the mandate of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
(CPA) to develop, promote and support Parliamentarians and their staff to identify benchmarks of good governance. To this end, we are fortunate that three of our presenters hold or have held executive roles within the CPA. Let me pause to acknowledge and introduce our guests.

- Secretary General of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Mr. Akbar Khan who is the 7th Secretary General.
- The Hon. Shirley Osborne, Speaker of Montserrat. She is the Chair Commonwealth Women Parliament for our Region.
- The Hon. Dr. Angelo Farrugia, Speaker of Malta. He is the Chair of the CPA Small Branches
- Mrs. Jacqui Sampson-Meiguel. The Clerk for the Trinidad and Tobago Parliament.

- Mr. Paul Bèlisle. Former Clerk for the Canadian Parliament.

CPA Support Staff, Anna, Bènite and Emily.

Let me also acknowledge the participation of our local Members.

- MP Thomas C. Famous who is one of the presenters.
- Senate President Joan Dillas-wright who will Chair some of the sessions.

Welcome to each of you and thank you for agreeing to participate in the seminar. I am sure your input will help us to understand the importance of following best practices
within the House and Senate, and with the public. We must keep in mind that the public’s perception of us is greatly affected by how the business of the House or Senate is conducted, be it positive or negative. It should be our goal that it is positive.

The format is not a classroom setting where the teacher will give instructions, nor is it a debate for individuals to take sides. This is an open discussion where all views and perspectives are valued and we recognize that we can listen to and learn from each other. I encourage open and honest dialogue with respect. Over the next couple of days, I encourage us each to use this time to reflect, to
look deep into the mirror, identify strengths and build on our successes.

As we discuss topics, please share what has worked in the past and what you want to see more of. In order to effect positive and meaningful change, it will take courage and forthsight to critically reflect on ourselves, what we have learned from our time in office and how we can do things differently together.

Next year Bermuda’s Parliament will celebrate 400 years of service. During that time we have seen many changes in Parliament that have reflected the advancements made in our society. We must continue to evolve a modern
democracy so when future parliamentarians look back at this time, they can clearly see the improvements we are making today.

As I preside over many of the debates, I often question the relevance of how Parliament is conducted in today’s Bermuda. Can the process allow for a better exchange knowing that there will always be differences politically and socially yet recognize that we share the common goal of improving life for our constituents and creating a better Bermuda.

The topics we will address over the next two days are designed to build connections between us and start
dialogues that hopefully will continue long after this seminar ends. Together we will explore the relevance of our words and actions when we debate in the House and as we interact with our constituents and within our community. Members, this a pivotal moment, as we take the step to enhance the work we do on behalf of Bermuda. We must reset the bar, elevate our discourse and engage the public meaningfully through our thoughts, words and deeds.

All that you will gain from this seminar would not be possible without the hard work of those behind the seen who have put in many hours to ensure that the seminar is
successful. Please join me in acknowledging Mrs. Wolfe and the staff in the legislature.

Thank you.