



REMARKS

By:

THE HON. JASON HAYWARD JP MP

THE MINISTER LABOUR

MINISTRY OF LABOUR UPDATE

23 JULY, 2020

Good Evening,

My remarks tonight will focus on updates in three (3) areas within the Ministry of Labour:

1. the Unemployment Benefit;
2. the Department of Workforce Development; and
3. the 1 Year Residential Certificate.

Extending the Unemployment Benefit

The public is aware that the Government's unemployment benefit which was extended from 12 to 16 weeks comes to an end on the 31st of July, 2020. At that time, three thousand eight hundred and two (3,802) applicants will receive their last payment. This number consists of:

- two thousand eight hundred and seventy (2,870) Bermudians;
- one hundred seventy two (172) Spouses of Bermudians;
- fifty (50) Permanent Resident Certificate Holders; and
- seven hundred (700) Work Permit Holders.

This will leave one thousand five hundred and fifty-five (1,555) individuals continuing to receive payments until their sixteen week period ends.

With the end of the Unemployment Benefit, there remain many in our community who are not yet on their feet and still require financial aid to provide the necessities of life such as food shelter and clothing. To address this, those individuals who have completed the Unemployment Benefit and are still in need of financial aid will need to first apply for financial assistance through the Department of Financial Assistance.

It should be noted at this time that the Government plans to extend the unemployment benefit for an additional two weeks to allow persons the opportunity to transition to the new benefit.

From Monday, 27, July 2020, Financial Assistance applications may be collected from the Lobby of Global House, 43 Church Street, Hamilton. Should you be unable to collect an application, you must contact the Department to make alternative arrangements. For additional information, persons can call the Department of Financial Assistance Hotline at: **297 7867**.

When filling out the application form, please note that the form must be 100% completed for the applicant to be considered for assistance. Once all the required information is on the form, they must be submitted in the mailbox located in Global House.

The Financial Assistance process is rigorous and applications will be vetted and applicants will be notified accordingly. Should your

application for financial assistance be approved, you will begin receiving the approved monthly award payments.

For persons who are **not** eligible for Financial Assistance, the Government wishes to advise that it will introduce a supplemental unemployment assistance. The Government will provide further details about the nature of this financial support in coming public announcements. However, eligibility for this support will likely be as follows. You must:

- Be Bermudian or Spouse of Bermudian;
- Be a recent recipient of the Unemployment Benefit Fund;
- Have fully completed the Financial Assistance application process; and
- Other criteria that will be shared in due course.

Persons who receive such a benefit must immediately notify Government when they commence any form of employment as they will no longer be eligible. It must be stated, that the aid given is only a temporary measure to help persons through this difficult time.

Workforce Department Update

The Department of Workforce Development, provides assistance to individuals who are seeking employment by providing them with work readiness training, career guidance, scholarships and bursaries for retraining, and apprenticeship opportunities. Due to the COVID-19 safety measures taken by the government, the Department had reduced its traditional activities to administer the Unemployment Benefit.

As we continue with Phase 4, the department has recommenced with various services. Services and programmes included the delivery of the Summer Internship Programme (SIP) for fifty (50) High School students who received up to a stipend of \$1,600 at the end of the four week programme.

Also ongoing is the ten-week Summer Employment Programme for college and university students which also provides work experience and a weekly wage of \$600. The programme has seventy-five (75) interns enrolled in it and lasts for a period of ten (10) weeks.

Job Readiness

In the area of Career Development, where officers engage with members on the public to provide job readiness support, the Department has begun meeting with clients virtually. Clients are also seen in-office where necessary to assist with updating resumes and work with employers to ensure unemployed persons are considered for job vacancies.

Training Programs

In the Training Section of the Department, discussions have resumed with external stakeholders such as employers, industry associations and other industry educational partners, regarding existing and new training programmes. The objective is to gauge the level of training, qualifications, and employment opportunities available to Bermudians. Training Officers are obtaining feedback on recommended short and long term programmes and services that need to be provided in the Post-COVID-19 era in Bermuda.

Scholarship Awards

Additionally, the department has collaborated with the National Training Board Scholarship Committee to offer ten (10) scholarships in 2020 for students studying in the areas of:

1. Hospitality;
2. Information Technology;
3. Healthcare;
4. Vocational; and
5. Technical trades.

The scholarship awards are expected to be announced in the next month.

Training Scheme

The Department continues to work with the Office of the Tax Commissioner to offer the payroll tax exemption scheme, which provides relief for employers who are committed to training Bermudians. To date, a total of eleven (11) companies and twenty-three (23) Bermudians have been awarded approval for training.

The Department is now implementing its strategic two-phase plan. The first phase aims to target industry sectors where there may be a reduction in work permit renewals, to identify opportunities to get Bermudians employed.

The second phase focuses on developing a talent pipeline for Bermuda by:

1. anticipating the future needs of the various industry sectors;
2. work collaboratively with industry partners to design and develop training programs and apprenticeships;
3. provide the funding in the form of scholarships and assistance to those individuals seeking further education to enable Bermudians to have the skills to compete.

Ultimately, the plans focus on what is needed in this new era of COVID-19 to get Bermudians employed.

Also under the Training Section, the Department offers National Certifications, in four (4) designated occupations:

1. Welding;
2. Electrical;
3. Automotive Service Technician; and
4. Landscape Gardening.

The objective is to have all registered tradesmen in the four (4) designated occupations obtain National Certification.

Digital Nomads & Students

With that said, the Government recognizes the challenge with securing employment and we are working on quick wins that will help stimulate our economy and get our residents back to work.

To that end, it has long been recognized that there are persons who are location-independent, using technology to perform their job no matter where they are. Such persons work remotely, telecommuting rather than being physically present at a company's headquarters or office. Remote working has been a growing trend for some time and is something the Bermuda Government has been examining as part of its technology-focused economic diversification strategy.

There are also many students in tertiary education across the world completing their classes online. By allowing Non-Bermudian Post-Secondary Students to complete their higher education from Bermuda represents an opportunity to build an international student community in Bermuda and enhance Bermuda's digital perception by travelers worldwide, which will produce benefits to the local economy.

It must be noted that these trends have been further accelerated by COVID-19.

And so allowing these visitors to reside in Bermuda without seeking employment on the island will promote economic activity for our country without displacing Bermudians in the workforce.

To capitalize on this opportunity, starting August 1, 2020, the Ministry of Labour through the Department of Immigration will offer One Year Residential Certificates to allow persons such as Digital Nomads the ability to reside in Bermuda while working remotely, and Non-Bermudian Post-Secondary Students the ability to complete their higher education from Bermuda.

The Ministry will also adjust its policy for visitors to the island by extending the maximum period a visitor may stay in Bermuda from 90 to 180 days.

I am confident that these policy changes will strengthen our economy by:

- increasing the residential population;
- increasing economic activity;
- providing greater job security for Bermudians; and
- enhancing Bermuda's image as a place to reside, visit, and do business.

All relevant documentation can be submitted along with the electronic submission form which will be available via the government portal on or before August 1, 2020.

Thank you.