



Remarks By

**The Hon. Diallo Rabain, JP, MP
Minister of Education and Workforce Development**

**School Buildings Readiness
Repair & Maintenance Projects**

Wednesday, 30 August, 2017

Good Afternoon,

I am here today to provide an update on the readiness of our school buildings for 2017/18 academic year which officially begins for all students on Monday, September 11th.

During the summer months, Government workers in both the Ministries of Education and Workforce Development and Public Works undertake a scheduled maintenance and building upgrades to improve our school facilities in preparation for the start of school each September. The purpose of the annual program is to carry out repairs that will ensure a safe and healthy environment for our students, principals, teaching, and administrative staff.

We are in the final stages of cleaning and repair work at the majority of public schools and I am pleased to report that they are on schedule to be fully operational and ready for handover to our teachers on September 1st.

Significant repair and maintenance projects undertaken to improve our school buildings included:

- The renovation of student restrooms at Lyceum and Warwick Preschools and T.N. Totem Middle School
- The tent fumigation of Victor Scott Primary school and West Pembroke's infant block
- Roof replacement at Elliot Primary
- The installation of a natural playground at St. David's Preschool
- Installation of perimeter fencing at Hope Academy
- Hallway and classroom floor resurfacing projects at Somerset Primary, Southampton Preschool, Prospect Preschool, Harrington Sound Primary and St. David's Primary

- Additional maintenance at various school sites including: pest control assessments, fire alarm inspection testing and installation, water fountain maintenance and cleaning and power washing at various school sites.

As the public is aware, Dellwood Middle School was closed on June 12 resulting in students having to complete their 2016/17 school year at the Bermuda College. There have been ongoing concerns at Dellwood regarding air quality, leaks and mould. After an assessment and testing by the Department of Health, problem areas were identified and contractors to do remediation works were sought.

It is unfortunate that the previous Government did not allocate the funding needed to address these issues when they were identified in June. As a result, It was not, however, until July 25, some 6 weeks after the school was closed, that at this new Government's first Cabinet meeting, the funding was approved to get Dellwood Middle School safe for the upcoming school year. Despite the hard work and long hours by both the Ministry of Works staff and the 3 contractors on site, we have determined that Dellwood Middle School will not be ready in time for the September 11 opening.

I want to assure the public that every effort is being made by my team to ensure that our students have minimal disruption to their learning. The Commissioner of Education, the Department of Education's Facilities Manager, a representative from the Department of Health, the Minister of Public Works and I have meet with the Dellwood team that included the Principal, PTSA Exeuctive, Staff and BUT Executive Members to determine the best and most suitable alternative arrangements to start the school year. While the preferred option will be to have students back at their school, Dellwood Middle School students will be housed initially in alternative locations in the City of Hamilton. Despite this challenge, the students of Dellwood Middle School will received the care and attention, by the Dellwood Middle School Staff and the Department of Education that is necessary to ensure their quality of learning will remain at a high level. By September 6th, we will know the final details of this this temporary relocation and the general public will be notified accordingly.

Outside of Dellwood Middle School, all schools are expected to be ready to be opened on schedule on September 11th.

This new Government has inherited a severely neglected school infrastructure. To put this in perspective, 27 of our 29 Primary and Middle schools are older than our existing Airport; an

airport that is currently being replaced. It appears that year after year of patchwork has left us with buildings in need of serious attention. Despite these challenges, we have worked tirelessly from July 19th, 2017 to ensure that what we had to work with was made safe for our students. Once the school year is under way, the Ministries of Education and Workforce Development and Public Works will examine how school maintenance is managed and, going forward, will be implementing a year round maintenance plan.

Additionally, as promised in our election platform, structural, mechanical, electrical and health and safety building inspection reports of all schools will be initiated to assist us to have a complete picture of the condition of all of our schools. This new government will keep its promise to ensure that public education is a priority.

This year, we are grateful for the additional assistance that we have received from the members of the public to help get our schools ready. Ms. Angela Young and her team of Work Rally Volunteers have done a great public service and their efforts are to be applauded. On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Workforce Development and the Government of Bermuda, I thank them for their commitment, drive and willingness to share the load in helping to get our schools ready for the school year.

Let me close by thanking the teams at the Ministries of Education and Workforce Development and Public Works who are tasked with maintaining, repairing and cleaning our schools in the face the awesome challenges they have had to face year after year. Many of our existing school facilities need to be replaced, but we are grateful for the teams who work all year to keep them safe for students, staff and their surrounding communities.

Thank you