



*Government of Bermuda*

**Ministry of Labour, Community Affairs and Sports**

## **Ministerial Statement**

By

**The Hon. Lovitta Foggo, JP, MP**

Minister of Labour, Community Affairs and Sports

### **Updates on the Department of Workforce Development Programs**

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2018

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**Mr. Speaker,**

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update on the various initiatives being undertaken by the Department of Workforce Development to assist and prepare individuals for the world of work. The Department of Workforce Development carries out two main operational functions, namely Career Development and Training. The Career Development Section provides assessments, employment assistance and job readiness training while the Training Section administers educational funding programs, manages the apprenticeship and trainee programs and regulates certification standards in four designated occupational trades.

**Mr Speaker,**

In 2008 the National Certification legislation came into effect. In December 2017, the Training Section of the Department began National Certification in four specific occupations as required by legislation. This required Welders, Electricians, Automotive Service Technicians, and Landscape Gardeners to register with the Department of Workforce Development and participate in occupational training and assessments in order to achieve the National Certification designation. As of October 1, 2018, the number of registrants for National Certification totaled:

- 226 Electricians;
- 30 Welders;
- 214 Automotive Service Technicians; and

- 575 Landscape Gardeners

**Mr. Speaker,**

There has been a reputable shift in the number of Bermudians who achieved National Certification since December 2017 in the four occupations totaling:

- 108 Electricians;
- 15 Welders;
- 143 Automotive Service Technicians; and
- 84 Landscape Gardeners.

The remaining non-certified registrants are currently being assessed for approval by the Occupational Advisory Committee as provided under the National Occupational Certification Act 2004.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Training Section has been diligently collaborating with the Department of Immigration to deliver an effective Work Permit Policy with respect to National Certification. This Policy remains under review. However, this collaborative consultation process will ultimately result in alignment of the Work Permit Policy with National Certification to ensure

- (1) Uniform advertising for positions that align with Certification criteria thus helping to level the playing field for Bermudians
- (2) Certified Bermudians are given a fair chance at any positions in that certified trade,
- (3) Employers demonstrate that they interviewed Certified Bermudian workers prior to being able to apply for a work permit, and
- (4) potential guest workers demonstrate competency in their respective occupational trade that will satisfy Bermuda's National Certification requirements before a work permit is granted.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Training Section is also responsible for the establishment of Apprenticeships. Apprenticeships combine full-time employment and training under a skilled journeyman and creates a pathway for Apprentices to acquire a qualification. Steady

progress has been achieved with a total of forty-seven (47) Apprentices and Trainees registered with the Department of Workforce Development at October 1<sup>st</sup> 2018.

Benefits associated with the establishment of an apprenticeship programme include:

- Payroll Tax Waiver for the employer; and
- Apprentices receive paid work experience while pursuing a trade qualification.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Training Section awards scholarships based on Bermuda's workforce needs, particularly in occupations of underrepresentation by Bermudians. Scholarships awarded to-date include forty-two (42) students for overseas studies, totaling three hundred eighty-five thousand (\$385,000); of which twenty-nine (29) were new and thirteen (13) are continuing students. Fifty-eight (58) students were awarded funding for Bermuda College studies, totaling one hundred seventy thousand (\$170,000); of which thirty-four (34) were new and twenty-four (24) were continuing awards.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Training Section is currently expanding the Apprenticeship and Training Schemes. To this aim they have begun engaging employers to better understand their needs and how to increase apprenticeship and training opportunities for Bermudians. As a result of collaborating with employers, five new companies have signed agreements with the Department to train Bermudians in the field of Medical Coding and Billing, Computer Programming, Plumbing, Air-Conditioning and Refrigeration and Heavy Equipment Operators. Additionally, efforts to assist employers by providing support to train their existing Bermudian staff for career progress within their respective companies is also underway. The intent is to encourage career advancement and increased entry level opportunities for Bermudians.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Career Development Section prepares and supports individuals for work placement, particularly the vulnerable population group. Currently, a total of one thousand four hundred fifty-two (1,452) persons are registered with the Department as either unemployed or seeking alternative employment. Of the total persons

registered, three hundred sixty (360) received Career Development services during the five-month period, May to September 2018. These services were varied and comprised of interest and skill assessments, resume development, employability training workshops, job search assistance, career guidance and case management towards job readiness. However, after receiving these services, only fifty (50) individuals actually provided feedback of their success in finding employment in areas such as compliance, hospitality, construction and cleaning.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Recently, the Department hosted an event in the west end community. There were general workshops on “Understanding What Employers Want: Employability Skills”, “Your Online Image and Employment”, and “Interview Skills: Winning over the Recruiter”. Participants also had the opportunity to visit breakout stations and consult one-on-one with professionals on (1) Resume Development and Critique; (2) Bermuda Job Board Registration; (3) Job Leads and Future Opportunities; (4) National Certification; (5) Apprenticeships; (6) Bermuda College Programs; and (7) Funding.

**Mr. Speaker,**

There has been significant follow-up with persons who attended the event in the west; assisting them with creating profiles on the Bermuda Job Board and arranging to meet further with staff to help them reach their career goals. Three more events of this nature are planned across the island between January and March 2019, taking the Department’s services to the community. This will allow the Department to capture details on persons who are unemployed but who would not ordinarily come into the Department to receive services. It is also an opportunity to increase awareness about the Department’s services and empower individuals and equip them with strategies to obtain their employment and career goals.

**Mr. Speaker,**

As a requirement of the 2015 Work Permit Policy, the Career Development Section received requests for referrals relating to two hundred eighty-five (285) positions which were Restricted Jobs since May 2018. There were one hundred seventy-four (174) suitable candidates referred and sixty-two (62) hires during the same period. Currently, the referral process for Restricted Jobs is executed manually. In an effort to increase efficiency and shift to a paperless work environment, the Department

plans to adopt a fully electronic referral system by December 2018, utilizing the Bermuda Job Board.

The electronic job board will be upgraded to encourage and solicit constructive feedback from employers who consider or hire applicants through referrals from the Department. The feedback on individuals that were not hired is vital to address any development areas applicants may have and subsequently design development plans to position persons with the requisite skillset for future employment.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Presently there are fourteen thousand, one hundred and thirty-seven (14,137) applicants registered on the Bermuda Job Board, two thousand and fifty-three (2,053) employers and two hundred and twenty-five (225) jobs posted. Since March 2016 there have been two thousand two hundred and four (2,204) hires through the Bermuda Job Board, consisting of nine hundred and sixty-two (962) in 2016; seven hundred and thirty-nine (739) in 2017 and five hundred and three (503) in 2018 to date.

The Career Development Section regularly facilitates and offers employability skills workshops in the Department's training room to equip job seekers with the tools necessary for employment success. Since May 2018, only fifty-nine (59) persons participated in specialized workshops such as interview skills, resume development, and self-presentation skills. The low attendance is primarily attributed to 'no shows' and low registration. Recognizing the importance of marketable work skills, employers and human resource professionals have consistently indicated the need for applicants to develop and strengthen their soft skills and life skills. These are critical characteristics needed for employee hiring and retention in the workplace apart from the requisite technical skills. As such, the Career Development Section plans to expand its offerings of employability skills training to include online and evening courses in community clubs, churches and schools.

The Department is presently working on a public relations campaign to increase awareness of the Department's services and the advantages of being registered as a client. It is the intent to continue to collaborate with the Department of Communications to develop a marketing strategy that will support and drive the work of the Department. This strategy will focus on greater visibility and

engagement with employers and the community through outreach, satellite training, increased education and awareness, career fairs, town hall meetings and social media campaigns. A Marketing Strategy will be completed in December 2018 for immediate implementation. Much of this work is aligned with the National Workforce Development Plan which the Department intends to progress further as we continue to improve internal processes.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Department of Workforce Development will continue to assist and prepare persons for the world of work. The public relations strategy will support and drive the initiatives being undertaken by the Department. Once again, it gives me great pleasure at this time to update this Honourable House about the progress of the programs within the Department.

**Thank you Mr. Speaker**