



Ministerial Statement

By

The Hon. Lovitta Foggo, JP, MP

Minister of Labour, Community Affairs and Sports

WAGE COMMISSION

31st January 2020

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to provide this Honourable House with an update on the introduction of a minimum and living wage in Bermuda. My Honourable colleagues will recall the report of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Establishment of a Minimum/Living Wage regime for Bermuda submitted to this Honourable House on the 20th July 2018 by the Honourable member, Mr. Rolfe Commissiong who chaired the Committee.

Mr. Speaker,

This Government made a commitment to *“commence consultation on the Joint Select Committee report on a liveable wage with the intent of enacting a living wage regime”*.

Mr. Speaker,

The consultation began with Town Hall meetings in May last year including St. Paul’s Church in the City of Hamilton, St George’s Cricket club at the East end and Somerset Cricket Club at the West end. The panel members include the Honourable member, Mr. Commissiong, Mr. Philip Perinchief, Mr. Cordell Riley, Mr. Nathan Kowalski, Mr. Philip Barnett and Mr. Chris Furbert.

Mr. Speaker,

The Town Halls were well attended and after the panel members presented their views on a minimum/living wage it was then open to members of the public to ask questions. This generated some lively discussion with the panel and the public’s knowledge and engagement on the subject was very encouraging. The consultation has not stopped with Town Hall meetings and I have also had meetings with the Chamber of Commerce to update them, including meeting with their restaurant division on Wednesday gone.

Mr. Speaker,

You will recall that this Honourable House with unanimous support passed the Employment (Wage Commission) Act 2019 which came into effect in October of last year.

Mr. Speaker,

The Act provides amongst other things for the establishment of a Wage Commission. Their work will be considerable as subject to the provisions of the Act and regulations made, the Commission are required to conduct studies, reviews and analyses as necessary to determine the requirements for a basic standard of living in Bermuda and, to make recommendations on the minimum hourly wage and on the living wage rate to be prescribed by the Minister.

Mr. Speaker,

I am pleased to announce that I have appointed the Wage Commission under the Chairmanship of Mr. Cordell Riley.

Mr. Riley is the Managing Director of Profiles of Bermuda, a company he founded in 1998. The firm conducts human resource assessments, training and development, as well as market, business and tourism research. Mr. Riley, a former government statistician, has authored numerous articles in the tourism and human resource fields, and has spoken at a number of international conferences.

Mr. Speaker, he also facilitates a number of training and development courses for both the public and private sectors. Since 2003, Mr. Riley has taught GED Math at Bermuda’s maximum-security prison and more recently had Life-Skills added to his teaching portfolio. Mr. Riley is also studying Social Science at

the doctorate level, concentrating on Black economic development in Bermuda post the 1959 desegregation movement.

He was a contributor to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Establishment of a Minimum/Living Wage regime for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, under the chairmanship of Mr. Riley I have appointed; Mr. Chris Furbert, Mr. Robert Stubbs, Mr. Philp Barnett, Ms. Martha Dismont and Mr. Craig Simmons to serve on the Wage Commission.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chris Furbert is a well-known advocate for workers rights and has been the President of the Bermuda Industrial Union since 2006. He has extensive experience in Bermuda's Labour laws and the challenges faced by workers and Bermudian families in the Bermuda economy.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Furbert's entire working life has revolved around Bermuda's waterfront. In 1971 at age 18 he began a career as a third generation longshoreman, not unlike his grandfather. At the same time he became a member of the Dock Workers Division of the BIU. He skillfully worked his way up through the ranks both Divisional Officer and as a docks foreman. He became Divisional President in 1981, the same year he undertook the first of a number of leadership training courses at the George Meany Centre in Washington, D.C. In 1987 after successfully completing a course in economics in Washington Mr. Furbert left the waterfront to become a fulltime Organizer of the BIU and went on to become the President in 2006. Mr. Furbert was a contributor to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Establishment of a Minimum/Living Wage regime for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Robert Stubbs is co-founder and Head of Research of SEED Bermuda, a local think tank set up to produce Social, Economic and Environmental Development solutions for Bermuda. He was formerly Head of Research for Bank of Bermuda, responsible for producing the bank's global macroeconomic research distributed to clients world-wide and used in forming investment strategy for the bank's global asset management.

In an effort to understand the origins of and potential solutions to Bermuda's economic crisis, Robert Stubbs began in-depth research of the local economy in 2015. Since then, he has communicated his research results extensively throughout Bermuda through research papers, public presentations and frequent op-ed's in the Royal Gazette.

Mr Speaker, Since 2016, Mr. Stubbs has consulted for Bermuda's Fiscal Responsibility Panel. In 2017, he testified to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Living Wage. In 2018, he served on the Cost of Living Commission and consulted for the Tax Reform Commission. He was also a contributor to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Establishment of a Minimum/Living Wage regime for Bermuda. Mr. Stubbs is a Chartered Financial Analysts, holds an International Bond Dealers Diploma (ICMA) and has completed the ACAS actuarial exams.

Mr Speaker, Mr. Philip Barnett is the President, Managing Director, and one of four shareholders of Island Restaurant Group Ltd. (IRG). During his tenure, Philip has overseen the opening or rebranding of four restaurants, the purchase of an additional restaurant and brewery, and the startup of a catering operation. IRG restaurants are the winners of over 30 Best of Bermuda and Product and Service Awards (P&S).

Mr. Barnett formerly worked for the Spectra Group of Great Restaurants in Vancouver, Canada, which he fell into during the time he was gaining a Bachelor's degree through the University of British Columbia. He came home to Bermuda and opened the Pickled Onion Bar and Restaurant, ultimately purchasing shares in it and two sister restaurants Hog Penny and Barracuda Grill, and accepted the president's role in 2002. Mr. Barnett has now worked in the restaurant industry for 32 years.

Mr. Speaker, he has been active in the Bermuda Chamber of Commerce for over eighteen years, Philip was an Executive Board Member, and held the role of President of the Chamber from 2007 through 2009. He is also on the Board of the Bermuda Festival of the Performing Arts, and was also a member of the Bermuda First lobbying group, serving on the Tourism subcommittee. Current Bermuda Government boards that Mr. Barnett sits on include the Bermuda Tourism Authority as a founding board member, and former positions include the Board of Education (Board of Governors). He is also a member of (YPO), in the Bermuda chapter.

Mr. Speaker, Martha Dismont is the Executive Director of Family Centre; which she founded in 1990. Originally from New York State, Mrs. Dismont worked as a Social Worker for the State of New York.

She has spent most of her time in Bermuda developing Family Centre, and serving on various community boards, including the Board of Education, the Sustainable Development Roundtable, the Chewstick Foundation, and the XL Foundation. She currently is a director of the Bermuda National Standards Committee, and serves on the Chamber of Commerce.

Ms. Dismont is co-founder and Immediate Past Chair of the Inter Agency Committee for Children and Families, which includes an initiative to create an island-wide continuum of care for youth and families. In 2013, she was asked to serve as Chairperson for the Performance Committee on the Bermuda Government SAGE Commission, and currently serves on the Judicial Legal Services Committee

Mr. Speaker, the Family Centre became the first social service agency to receive international accreditation from the Council on Accreditation, based in NYC. In 2002, she received The Queen's Certificate of Honour in recognition of her services to education, and in 2015 was awarded a Member of the British Empire, MBE. In 2015, she also received the Cablevision Rollin R. Nathan Community Service Award for Outstanding Service in the Community.

Mr. Speaker, Last but not least is Mr. Craig Simmons. Mr. Simmons is a senior lecturer in economics at the Bermuda College. He holds an M.A., from York University, a B.A and B.Ed. from the University of Western Ontario. He is well known locally for his expertise in economics and his advice is well regarded and often sought. He recently served on the Tax Reform Commission in 2018, as a member of a Blue Ribbon Panel in 2017 and as a consultant to Bermuda First in 2019. He was also a contributor to the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on the Establishment of a Minimum/Living Wage regime for Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to thank the Chairman and members for agreeing to serve. There is much work to be done and all stakeholders will have an opportunity to make representations to the Commission. This further consultation, research and analysis by the Commission is critical to the establishment of a minimum and living wage in Bermuda and I look forward to receiving their report in due course.

Thank you Mr. Speaker