



## Ministerial Statement

By

**The Hon. Jamahl Simmons, JP, MP**

Minister without Portfolio (with Responsibility for Communications)

### Government Feedback Forum for COVID-19

May 08<sup>th</sup> 2020

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**Mr. Speaker,**

Today I would like to provide this Honourable House with an update on the very valuable public feedback and contributions that we have received during our management of this COVID 19 crisis.

**Mr Speaker,** this Government is committed to providing members of the public with the opportunity to offer their ideas, suggestions and indeed, their opinions. We welcome the input from those we serve as we recognize that we do not always have all the answers. This, we believe, is a healthy practice in a democratic society and we have therefore, created avenues during this COVID-19 episode for our citizens to express their views on how we can best achieve economic and social recovery.

**Mr Speaker,** through a variety of means that we have provided for the public, our citizens have expressed their views quite candidly and freely. This is a clear sign that people understand the significance of their vested interest and the need to be a part of the solution. The vehicle used for this purpose is the Citizens Forum at [forum.gov.bm](http://forum.gov.bm). We have found this forum to be quite effective in enabling our citizens to express their views without much impediment.

**Mr Speaker**, the public was asked to provide suggestions to stimulate Bermuda's economy once the Shelter-in-Place ended. To date, we have received one one hundred and thirty six (136) submissions, which generated one hundred and eighty four (184) ideas. Additionally these submissions generated one hundred and nine (109) comments, with the vast majority of those, one hundred and seven (107), showing support for the ideas submitted.

**Mr Speaker**, we have been very impressed by the substance and innovation contained in these submissions. Clearly, individuals have shown a keen interest in making a contribution to the recovery of our country post-COVID-19.

**Mr Speaker**, I hasten to add that many of the comments have been quite laudatory of the manner in which this Government has handled the COVID-19 crisis, a dilemma that has posed extraordinary challenges to every segment of our community and economy, and indeed, the entire world. I shall not identify the source but, this is a direct quote from one of the responses we received:

*“David Burt, the Premier of Bermuda, Cabinet Ministers, career government leaders and other public and private-sector executives have done a tremendous job of managing the unmanageable Covid-19 pandemic.*

*A debt of thanks is owed to all of them — as well as to frontline workers — for protecting our community's health, families and wellbeing in this uncertain and fast-changing environment.”*

**Mr Speaker**, of equal importance are the excellent and optimistic ideas for economic recovery we have received from members of the public, which we intend to explore. Some of these ideas include the following:

- Call on global executives and job creators, such as re/insurance leaders, to join the national effort to rebuild Bermuda's economy
- Leverage the expertise and international perspective of these figures to enhance Bermuda's competitiveness in the global market
- Incentivise job growth
- Manage a gradual reopening
- Facilitate a restaurant-business partnership to jump-start our local food and beverage industry
- Use our stable government leadership during Covid-19 as an example of a positive attribute to promote Bermuda around the world
- Pursue globally significant institutions and personnel to make Bermuda a Regional Hub for innovation and excellence in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Educational methods and curriculum
- Creation of High Streets in Hamilton, Dockyard and St George's
- Changes to import duties on certain items
- Beachside dining
- Bermuda Star rating for hotels
- Legislate minimum standards for hotels
- Increased local food production
- Changes to our tax structure
- Resurrect our boat-building industry

**Mr Speaker**, these are but a few of the numerous thought-provoking and wide-ranging submissions we have received from all quarters of our community. It is indeed very encouraging to see so much interest from such a diverse cross-section of Bermuda and this augurs well for us as we strive to work our way not only through this pandemic but, beyond it.

**Mr Speaker**, on behalf of this Government, I offer my sincere thanks to all those who have submitted their ideas and for taking the time to provide such thoughtful and cogent suggestions. This Government is committed

to being inclusive and we recognize that we do not have a monopoly on good ideas. I would therefore, like to encourage those in our community who have not already done so to weigh in with their ideas as we welcome input from everyone. They can do so by going to [forum.gov.bm](https://forum.gov.bm).

**Mr Speaker**, this Government wishes the public to be aware that their contributions are valued and that there are some that we are already examining closely to determine how best they may be incorporated into the Government's plan going forward.

**Mr. Speaker**, in closing, I am extremely proud to note the significant number of submissions we have received and more so, the very encouraging message of unity that this whole process has registered. That unity is what will not only get us through this crisis but also, provide a solid foundation on which to build and sustain our economic and social recovery.

**Thank you, Mr. Speaker.**