

Unemployment Registration Drive

Ministerial Statement

By

Senator, the Hon. Kim N. Wilson, J.P.

Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry

Wednesday, 3rd August, 2011

Madam President, I am pleased to share the results of the Unemployment Registration Drive conducted during a two week period, from Tuesday, 21st June through Friday, 1st July, 2011.

Madam President, you will recall that the aim of the Unemployment Registration Drive was to identify unemployed persons living in Bermuda with a view to having a better understanding of unemployment in Bermuda; to compile a database of unemployed residents; and to better inform training and workforce development programmes based on the needs of the unemployed persons within our community.

You will further recall Madam President, that to execute the Drive, The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry partnered with the Department of Statistics, the Department of eGovernment and the Information Technology Office. Additionally, a number of social clubs and other entities contributed to the success of the data collection exercise.

Madam President, I can now confirm that one thousand and eighty-one (1,081) persons registered as a part of the Unemployment Registration Drive.

The median age of all registrants was 38 years.

Male registrants were slightly older than their female counterparts with a median age of 39 years compared to 38 for women.

Madam President, the study revealed that a number of persons are in fact working but consider themselves unemployed. This group has been classified as “underemployed” and represents twenty-eight per cent of the respondents or a total of 308 persons.

Of this group, 11 per cent are “working but looking for work in a specific field” and seventeen per cent are “working but looking for more work”.

Madam President, underemployment exists when a worker is employed, but desires more work than that which is available to him or her. The term also includes working persons who aspire to work in a field that they do not currently work in.

Underemployment exists for two main reasons. That is:

- i. The income earned from the job held is usually not sufficient to maintain the standard of living that a

worker has become accustomed to, hence the need to secure extra income; and

- ii. Available employment options may have limited a person to work for a lower wage or salary in a specific field.

Madam President, the reported underemployment perhaps supports the fact that as the economy evolves and changes, people are prepared to retrain and accept jobs in new areas despite the fact that the salary may be less.

Certainly, initiatives such as the moratorium on work permits are proving useful in terms of providing employment opportunities for persons seeking employment. Also, I continue to encourage employers to do their part and to favourably consider applicants that may once have been deemed “over qualified” for particular jobs. Certainly a seasoned professional, seeking an opportunity to return to the trenches and making an application, is worthy of consideration in today’s job market.

Madam President, The International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland, defines “unemployed workers” as those persons who are currently not working, who are willing and able to work for pay, currently available to work, and are actively searching for work. The ILO’s definition was utilized by researchers in compiling and analyzing the Unemployment Registration Drive data to identify unemployed residents in Bermuda.

Of one thousand and eighty-one (1,081) persons that registered, 741 or 69 per cent were “unemployed”.

594 of this group were black, while white registrants accounted for 11 per cent or 80 persons.

Ninety-six per cent of those seeking jobs were Bermudian.

Madam President, the largest proportion of unemployed persons, forty-six per cent, or 494 people, reported senior secondary school as the highest level of schooling ever attended, while twenty-one per cent or 224 unemployed persons reported a two-year college as the highest level of schooling ever attended and seventeen per cent or 189 persons reported having attended three or more years of University.

The majority of the unemployed persons reported that their last jobs were in:

- construction;
- retail trade/repair services;
- public administration;
- transport/communication;
- financial intermediation; and
- Business services.

These six industry types accounted for 50 per cent of all jobs held immediately prior to persons becoming unemployed.

The vast majority, one third, of unemployed persons cited layoffs and redundancy as the reason for termination, while twenty-two per cent of the respondents stated that their work project ended.

Madam President, of the unemployed persons, 9 percent were classified as senior officials and managers; 13 per cent as professionals, technicians and associate professionals; 43 per cent as clerks and service workers and 21 per cent as trade workers and plant and machine operators and assemblers.

Six in ten unemployed persons have been out of work for six months or more, and at the upper end, in terms of duration of unemployment, 109 respondents reported that they were looking for work for 2 years or more.

Madam President only half of all respondents reported ever being registered with the Department of Labour and Training to help find a job. This further underpins the value of the data collection exercise that has been undertaken. While certainly the data collected does not quantify the level of unemployment, it provides invaluable information that will allow the Department to better serve the needs of the unemployed and underemployed segments of our community.

A data reconciliation process has already been undertaken and where those identified as “unemployed” are not registered with the Department of Labour and Training, it is anticipated that each person will be contacted in the coming weeks to ensure that

the Department has sufficient information to advocate and job seek on their behalf.

Finally Madam President, the data gathered with respect to each segment will be used for the purposes of strategic planning. To this end, I and members of my team have already met with the KPMG Limited Advisory team, which has been engaged to assist with planning, to commence a review.

It is important that the people of Bermuda know that the information gathered during the Unemployment Registration Drive will be used on multiple levels - registered persons will be offered job search assistance and a strategic plan, with sustainable and long-term solutions to meet the training and job placement needs of the people of Bermuda will be produced.

I take this opportunity Madam President to thank those that registered and to encourage patience, but more importantly to encourage continued action.

Despite the extended periods of time that persons are finding themselves unemployed, it is important that unemployed persons make application for available jobs. I cannot stress this point enough. Please know that during times such these we must continue to persevere.

In the interim, I and some of my colleagues are preparing to launch a series of short and medium term initiatives involving training, job placement and “back to work” programmes very

soon. I trust that these programmes will provide an added incentive and much need reprieve to those seeking a short-term income boost.

Thank-you Madam President.