

REMARKS

Premier the Hon E David Burt, JP, MP

Minister Responsible for Tourism

**Ministry of Labour and St. Regis Hotel Partner for Training and
Employment Initiative**

11 March 2021 – 11:30 am

Good morning.

Junior Minister of Labour, Senator Arianna Hodgson, Ms. Laura Purroy, General Manager Hotelco Bermuda Holding, Mr. Jan Vanhaelewyn, General Manager of The St. Regis Bermuda Resort.

I am pleased to be here today, joined by the Junior Minister of Labour, as she announces exciting training and employment opportunities for Bermudians at the soon to be open St. Regis Hotel in St. Georges.

While we have been navigating through the many challenges brought on by the pandemic, this Government focused on the health and well-being of the country, while also managing our economic recovery and supporting those most affected. Many of those severely impacted by the economic effects of the coronavirus work within our hospitality and tourism industry.

That is why today, I am delighted to support the Foundation of Excellence Learning & Development programmes, and the TakeCare Programme, as well as the creation of over 90 jobs at St. Regis to help get Bermudians back to work, and excel in their careers.

The St. Regis Hotel and Bermuda's newest golf course, Five Forts Golf Club, is scheduled to open in May, and it is great to see this project nearing completion. This new hotel is welcoming news for Bermuda, especially for the historic town of St. George's.

The dynamic partnership between St. Regis & the Ministry of Labour to train and employ Bermudians to work in their hotel and golf course is commendable, and the Government looks forward to seeing the positive results it will have for St. Regis, local Bermudians who are employed, and our visitors who will benefit from world-class service.

Predictably, the last year presented unprecedented challenges for the industry. Our hotel inventory was significantly reduced. Visitor spending was down 88.7% in 2020 compared with 2019. Total visitors arriving by air decreased by 84.4%, with leisure air visitors down 86.6%, and airline seats to Bermuda fell 70.6%. Cruise passenger arrivals were down 98.3%.

However, we anticipate better results in 2021, and with valuable partnerships such as the one we are highlighting today we are confident that we will emerge stronger.

As a country we recognize that in order to have a better year, we must remain a safe and healthy destination. I am confident that we will. We have a robust COVID testing regime and an aggressive vaccination programme, and we are using technology to ensure that Bermuda can return to normal and remain a safe island.

Persons worldwide want to travel, and as more and more of them get vaccinated, they will want to go somewhere that continues to safely and effectively manage the coronavirus. Bermuda is that safe destination, and with new developments such as St. Regis, the hard work of our public officers, and the dedication of our hospitality and tourism professionals, the 2021 season will be a season of recovery.

I join the Junior Minister in encouraging Bermudians seeking employment to register with the Department of Workforce Development, visit their website bermudajobboard.bm, apply for the appropriate jobs and take advantage of the valuable training programmes and support that the Department of Workforce Development can provide.

Before I conclude I would like to make a personal note. People cannot imagine a more difficult time completing a hotel development, pushing forward with a hotel development and opening a hotel development at such a critical juncture. The Hotelco Bermuda Group has invested in this country, has supported this country, has supported the development of the town of St. George and are our excellent and amazing partners.

Laura (Purroy), on behalf of the Government of Bermuda, I would like to thank you and your family for the work and commitment of which you have made to this country. We are grateful for that investment and the government will continue to work with you to ensure that it works out well. It is a difficult time but the confidence of which you have shown will be matched by the confidence which we will continue to have with working with you.

As I said earlier, last year presented unprecedented challenges for the hospitality industry, but we are emerging stronger. Our island is slowly getting back to normal. Visitors will return, flights will increase, and the opening of St. Regis and its training and employment opportunities are a silver lining that indicates a brighter future ahead.

Thank you.