



Ministerial Statement

by

The Hon. Jason Hayward JP, MP

Minister of Labour

***Extending the Term for Financial Assistance of Abled-Bodied
Unemployment Recipients***

16 July 2021

Mr. Speaker and the Honourable Members of the House, I rise today to inform you that the Government intends to extend the five (5) year limitation for a payment of an award to abled-bodied, unemployed recipients of Financial Assistance for an additional two years by amending Section 6A of the Financial Assistant Regulations 2004 (The “Regulations”). The amendment will also make this change retroactive, effective from April 1, 2021, in order to validate payments made since the beginning of the 2021/22 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker,

The House will recall, that in accordance to Section 6A (1) of the Regulations “payment of an award to an abled-bodied recipient shall be limited to a maximum period of five (5) years, whether that period is –

- (a) continuous; or
- (b) an aggregate period made up of two or more awards.

Mr. Speaker,

The House should be advised that the five-year term for some financial assistance clients expired on March 31, 2021. Accordingly, a retroactive amendment to the legislation will be required to address the issue with respect to payments made since April 1, 2021.

Mr. Speaker,

The mission of the Department of Financial Assistance (the “DFA”) is to assist Bermudians to maintain a standard of living during challenging economic times. The DFA has always worked hard to achieve its mission and as of June 2021, the total number of Persons on Assistance was 2,306. The largest category pertained to Pensioners (1,037), followed by those with a Disability (786), then persons employed with insufficient earnings (245). The smallest category is the able-bodied unemployed persons (238) although, this number continues to trend upwards monthly

as a result of the labour market conditions in the aftermath the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take time to remind this Honourable House, that the DFA also provides funding support to eligible persons on financial assistance in the following areas:

- Rent
- Nursing and Rest Home Fees
- Food Allowance
- Health Insurance
- Disability Services
- BELCO Allowance
- Personal Home Care Allowance
- Medical Supplies and Equipment
- Telephone Allowance

Mr. Speaker, it is expected that the effects of the pandemic will be felt for some time into the foreseeable future. This could not have been predicted at the time the five (5) year term was introduced. This Government remains committed to assisting and supporting every Bermudian, especially those who face challenges in getting back to gainful and

meaningful employment. The Government remains steadfast in devotion to the community as the Island recovers and heals from this Pandemic.

Mr. Speaker,

As part of the financial assistance reform strategy, the Department of Workforce Development and the DFA have partnered to ensure that Personal Employment Plans are provided to financial assistance clients. Personal Employment Plans are designed to strengthen employment support services to Financial Assistance clients. Each Abled bodied recipient will be provided with an individual plan aimed helping recipients to achieve financial independence.

Mr. Speaker,

This initiative will help Bermudians to secure gainful and meaningful employment. The employment plans include work readiness, financial literacy, and computer literacy training, along with individual career coaching and support. These plans are a critical catalyst to empowering recipients and reducing their dependence of financial support.

Me. Speaker, as the Government has done since the onset of the pandemic, we will continue to provide the necessary support, assistance

and resources needed to carry Bermudians through this unprecedented,
and for many, unpredictable time.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker!**