



## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**By:**

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**THE MINISTER LABOUR**

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**VISION FOR THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR  
19 JUNE, 2020**

**Mr. Speaker,**

Today I rise to outline the vision for the Ministry of Labour moving forward. I will describe some of the exciting initiatives occurring in the Departments under the Ministry and some of the initiatives already in place to attempt to encourage business growth in Bermuda. The overarching aim of the Ministry of Labour will be the expansion of job within Bermuda.

**Open for Business**

The country is at a critical stage as the world and economies around the globe reel from the COVID-19 Global pandemic. It is now even more important for Bermuda to focus on expanding the economy. This is the best way to see an expansion in jobs. We must develop Bermudians for the jobs and careers of the future in this country. Bermudians should be provided with opportunities to develop and grow skillsets that they do not have.

## **Labour Law Reform**

**Mr. Speaker,**

Work has been underway for a number of years in the area of revising, updating and expanding the labour laws in this country. The Government will shortly introduce a consolidated Labour Law Act that will modernize, strengthen and enhance the rights of employers, employees and revise the labour dispute mechanisms in Bermuda.

In addition, work is being done to revise and improve the provisions of the Employment Act 2000. Both of these legislative changes are a long time coming and have had substantial input from employers, trade union representatives and the Government over the years.

## **Workforce Development Reorganization**

**Mr. Speaker,**

In line with Bermuda's National Workforce Development Plan, one of the priorities moving forward is the development of formal agreements with the business community identifying experiential learning for students.

Work also is to be done on improving the resilience of the Department and better alignment of efforts with the Bermuda College.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Bermuda's National Workforce Development Plan prioritizes engagement with industry stakeholders to gain a better understanding of employers' talent needs. A workforce development system must be employer driven. For the workforce development system to realize its full potential employers must be embraced as partners in the system. There must be an increased level of interaction between industry stakeholders and organizations within the workforce development system at all levels.

### **Financial Assistance Reform**

**Mr. Speaker,**

The staff at the Department of Financial Assistance have worked tirelessly over the last several months during COVID-19 and will continue to do so as the Department readies itself for increased demand of its services.

Financial Assistance has the challenge of continuing to find operational improvements within the Department, along with revising the formula and approach for how it provides its social benefits to its clients. There is an opportunity for Financial Assistance to provide necessary social safety nets while empowering individuals who receive services. The Department will undertake reform in these areas in the coming months.

## **Immigration Reform**

**Mr. Speaker,**

The work that was started under Minister Caines on Immigration Reform will continue uninterrupted.

Regarding the policy and legislative work undertaken, the Repatriation and Mixed Status Families Bill will be enacted and the Department will eventually begin accepting these applications.

The focus of reforms will also include a review of the current Work Permit Policy to be undertaken by the Immigration Board, led by MP Renee Ming. In addition, work on the issue of Permanent Resident Certificate holders will be progressed by the Bipartisan Immigration Reform Working Group, which will be chaired by Senator Crystal Caesar.

We also look forward to working with the Bermuda First Group on their innovative ideas to make immigration processing more efficient.

The concept of introducing a Pilot Program for the approval of work permit applications for good corporate citizens, with the aim of promoting the stability and advancement of Bermudians in their own country is still underway.

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Department of Immigration also worked with international business for the last 18 months to improve and streamline the work permit process. KPMG was retained to work with Immigration staff to identify and solve process challenges and I am pleased to report that the vast majority of the opportunities identified have now been implemented.

**Mr. Speaker,**

Since the conclusion of that engagement additional improvements have been made and will continue to be rolled out over the coming weeks. The next phase will be to push further for the full automation of the Department.

## **International Business Growth**

**Mr. Speaker,**

The Government of Bermuda is committed to retaining and growing jobs for Bermudians in the international companies sector. While there have been layoffs and job losses in many sectors of our workforce, Bermudians employed by international companies largely continue to work.

Bermudians make up almost two thirds of the workforce in international business. We must do all we can to keep these jobs and companies here in Bermuda.

It is worth noting that the Department of Immigration has a New Business Work Permit policy that enables exempted company start-ups to simply obtain the required number of work permits during the first six months of their operation in Bermuda. In addition, the Global Work Permit policy allows positions to be easily moved from overseas offices to Bermuda. These immigration policies aim to entice international companies to come to Bermuda and base as many jobs in Bermuda as possible.

**Mr. Speaker,**

In addition, the Government is enacting financial incentives for international business to grow the workforce in Bermuda. For existing companies there are exemptions for payroll tax for new jobs created, and in the future, exemptions for social insurance and pension contributions for a period of one year will be introduced. These policies help reduce the

cost of employing people in Bermuda and can aid in growing Bermuda's economy.

**Mr. Speaker,**

We continue to reap the benefits of the international business community's presence. Beyond employing many Bermudians directly, the international sector engages many local companies that employ Bermudians, and makes substantial contributions to the third sector.

It is the vision of the Ministry of Labour to comprehensively engage employers, labour and Government to reinvigorate the Bermuda economy, which benefits everyone. Thank you.

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