



**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT BY THE
MINISTER OF ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY
THE HON. PATRICE K. MINORS, JP MP
LABOUR, TRAINING AND JOB PLACEMENT
3RD FEBRUARY, 2012**

Mr. Speaker, during these stressful economic times, the single most important thing that we can do is to make sure that we continue to upgrade the skills of job seekers to ensure job readiness. This is a prerequisite for our economic longevity.

Therefore, I'm pleased to rise this morning to provide an update on the range of training programmes offered via the Department of Labour and Training as well as the job opportunities that the moratorium has created.

Mr. Speaker, there are numerous local training opportunities, some of which are available at little or no cost.

Further, the Department of Labour and Training will underwrite the cost of certain types of training for job seekers who are receiving financial assistance.

Training, in terms of time, effort and expense, is an investment which will pay dividends in securing employment and future career advancement. The Ministry encourages Bermudians to recognize the value of education and training as an integral part of meeting the needs of the labour market now and in the future.

Mr. Speaker, our goal is to substantially improve our ability to effectively support job seekers during this difficult economic period.

In 2011 close to six hundred (600) persons attended various training programmes sponsored by the Department of Labour and Training. This compared to 219 persons who attended similar programmes in 2010.

The huge increase in the number of persons attending training programmes from 2010 to 2011 can be attributed in part to the Department offering a wider selection

of programmes and making these programmes available to the general public as opposed to limiting the offering to registered clients of the Department of Labour & Training. Sustained unemployment levels are of course another contributing factor.

Mr. Speaker, the Department offers a series of soft skills training, computer courses, self help, and financial management training courses.

Soft Skills training consist of Work Place Ethics, Time Management, Interview Skills, Resume Development, Handling Conflict, Boosting Your Job Search Technique, Constructing a Cover Letter, The Power of Networking and Fast Track to a Better Job.

To build computer literacy, courses are offered in Basic Keyboarding, Beginners Computer, Microsoft Word, Introduction to Excel, and QuickBooks. Other business courses include Math Skills for Business, and Business Writing.

Mr. Speaker, there are also self help courses. These include Coping with Job Loss, Career Transitioning, and Employee Rights & Responsibilities.

A series of personal finance courses are another important component of the offering, such as Student Loans & Scholarships, Investing and the Economy, Mortgage, Loans & Credit and Budgeting & Saving.

Mr. Speaker, the Department continues to assist clients with special areas of study and in so doing provided scholarship funding to nineteen (19) students to attend the Bermuda College during the last year as well as assisted at least four others with tuition at Care Computer Learning Center and the Adult Education Centre.

Further, the Department via its National Training Board unit also entered into eighteen (18) formal contracts for apprenticeships in 2011 and a total of ten (10) companies were awarded tax relief via the Payroll Tax Waiver Programme as a result of the existence of qualifying training and apprenticeship programmes.

Mr. Speaker, to complement the array of training programmes that are designed to prepare jobseekers with new job prospects, the Ministry continues to work to

reduce the complement of non-Bermudian workers in areas where it is deemed that Bermudians have the requisite skills to perform the jobs.

Mr. Speaker, you will be aware of the moratorium on work permits in certain job categories, specifically, landscape gardeners, cleaners, kitchen porters and skilled labourers, that was implemented in February 2011 with a view to creating opportunities for Bermudian workers. Last year, close to ninety work permits in the moratorium categories were refused. This moratorium remains in place.

Mr. Speaker, honourable members will be aware that over the past several months the processing of many work permit applications has been delayed. When processing resumed recently, the work permits were categorized by area of specialization. The kitchen porter work permits were the first to be processed and in cases where applications for the renewal of work permits were refused, many employers were initially given an aggressive timeline associated with the stop work notification.

Mr. Speaker, while it's understandable that many deemed the timeline to be short, it is important to note that these work permits had in fact already expired and all of the employers had benefitted from continuity of service from these workers during the period that the processing was delayed.

Many will already know that "custom and practice" provides for work permit holders to continue to work once a work permit has been submitted to the Department for renewal. The employee continues to provide services until a decision is reached regardless of the expiration of the work permit.

Having reconsidered the initial stop work dates provided to the employers of kitchen porters affected, I can now advise that several kitchen porter work permit applications and appeals have since been considered and in the region of twenty-five (25) kitchen porter work permits have been refused. These workers have been advised to settle their affairs and leave Bermuda.

To ensure an effective transition wherein job ready Bermudians are prepared to assume these positions, the Department of Labour and Training in partnership with the division of Professional and Career Education at the Bermuda College will soon offer a job preparation course, the Principles of Cleaning and Sanitation.

The Principles of Cleaning and Sanitation, covers the fundamental knowledge that is required to effectively clean, and sanitize surfaces and areas. The course is expected to commence prior to the end of February and will be offered free of charge to qualified applicants. The objective is to provide practical training that leads to employment opportunities for Bermudians.

Further Mr. Speaker, I can advise that the adjudication of work permit applications has now commenced on another category of work permits also affected by extended processing delays. Specifically, construction company work permits. There was a significant backlog associated with mason and carpenter work permits.

During the past week, the team has been engaged in processing the backlog in this area.

At a recent meeting with the Construction Association of Bermuda, the executive officers were apprised of the situation and efforts have been made to keep them abreast of the processing progress. To date, many permits have been refused and in accordance with the discussions with the Construction Association an opportunity for a Construction Job Fair has evolved. Planning is currently in progress and as at the latest report, eighteen construction companies have signed on to participate in the job fair. It is expected that this number will increase as we work towards delivering this initiative.

Following the completion of the construction company work permit applications the remaining outstanding categories including cleaners and landscapers will be processed.

To be clear Mr. Speaker, the process of creating job opportunities for Bermudian workers is supported by a robust series of training and employment programmes in partnership with industry partners.

You will recall the Basic Horticulture Program. This pilot programme began in September 2011 and will run until June 2012. Sixteen (16) participants enrolled in the program. One of the requirements for remaining in this programme is to maintain employment with a related industry partner. It is expected that this

programme will be reviewed in consultation with industry to ensure that it is achieving the job ready objective following which a new cohort is expected to commence their studies.

Additionally Mr. Speaker, the Waiter/Server Programme is ongoing and meeting with great success. The first group of trainees who successfully completed the programme have all received job offers. Applications for this programme remains open as we work to achieving our goal of placing one hundred (100) people in jobs as a part of the phase one component of this initiative.

New job ready programmes are in the process of being developed and these will be rolled out in the weeks and months ahead.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the Department of Labour and Training placed close to four hundred (400) people in jobs mainly in the private sector and employed one hundred (100) summer students via the Government Summer Employment Programme.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry's short-term priority is putting in place the programmes, policies and legislation that are necessary to underpin economic growth and job creation. The longer-term priority is to achieve economic growth and prepare the Bermudian labour pool to succeed in filling the needs of the job market.

The Ministry aims to work with employers more closely because it's in everyone's best interest to employ more Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, we endeavour to educate and help people adapt to the new realities of the Bermuda economy and the employment opportunities that are available.

Our role is to assist job-seeking individuals to make the transition to the new economic circumstances and we will use all of the avenues available to us in meeting the training and employment needs of the people of Bermuda.

Thank you Mr. Speaker.