



Bermuda Government
Ministry of Labour

Senate

Ministerial Statement

The Ministry of Labour's Year-End Review 2021

**“Supporting Bermuda’s Workers and Building a Better
Bermuda for All”**

Presented by

Senator Arianna J. L. N. Hodgson, JP

Junior Minister of Labour

15th December 2021

Madame President;

I rise in this Honourable House today to provide you with an update of what the Ministry of Labour has accomplished over this past year.

Madame President;

The Ministry of Labour has worked hard to secure Bermuda's success by introducing policies that address the impact of the global crisis. The Ministry has progressed policies that strengthen the fundamental principles and rights in the workplace, enhance social protections, and foster economic growth. In short the Ministry is focused on promoting jobs, protecting Bermudians, and responding to the needs of the economy. Throughout the past year, Departments within this Ministry have worked to ensure that we:

- ✓ Eased the economic burden of those in need;
- ✓ Found the right formula to achieve economic activity and growth;
- ✓ Kept families together;
- ✓ Provided opportunities for jobseekers to achieve personal satisfaction; and
- ✓ Preserved jobs and implemented laws that support progress in the workplace.

I. EASED THE ECONOMIC BURDEN OF THOSE IN NEED

Madame President;

The impact of the global pandemic has not been easy on any of us. As we work our way back to a place where we can all prosper, in an effort to assist our people, particularly our most vulnerable, the Ministry of Labour has:

1. Implemented and extended the **Supplemental Unemployment Benefit Fund** from April 2021 to November 2021, and has provided approximately \$1,054,633 in benefits to assist those displaced from the workforce as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic;
2. Provided over \$5 million in **financial assistance** to unemployed able-bodied individuals, as well as those underemployed from April 2021 to November 2021;

3. Provided over four hundred (400) Bermudians with information on the various services, programmes and initiatives offered in response to the **Minister's Appeal for Unemployed Bermudians** to register at the Department of Workforce Development.
4. **Expanded financial assistance benefits for an additional two years** to over 100 individuals and families who would have timed out of support in 2021.
5. **Tabled the Wage Commission's Report** containing recommendations on a minimum wage. This brings Bermuda one step closer to implementation of a much needed minimum wage, in alignment with a living wage.
6. Undertook stakeholder feedback on the Government's Consultation Paper for a proposed **Unemployment Insurance Fund and developed a roadmap for the implementation of an Unemployment Insurance scheme**. This will enable a phased implementation in 2023 that will ensure adequate protections for unemployed workers.

II. FOUND THE RIGHT FORMULA TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY AND GROWTH

Madame President;

To strike the right balance to achieve economic success while also ensuring our people benefit, the Ministry of Labour has:

1. **Implemented the Economic Investment Certificate and Residential Certificate policy** entitling a person to reside in Bermuda. To date, this has generated over \$32 million through direct investment in the Bermuda economy.
2. **Implemented the One-year Work from Bermuda policy** which yielded over 900 residents and generated over \$23m into the economy. While also referred to as "Permission to Reside on an Annual Basis", permission can be obtained for periods of up to five (5) years. As of November 2021, two hundred and six (206) Work from Bermuda Certificate holders remain on the island.
3. **Increased visitor stays** permitting visitors to remain in Bermuda an additional 90 days for a total of 180 days.

III. KEPT FAMILIES TOGETHER

Madame President;

The family unit plays a crucial role in the social development of our community. To keep families together the Ministry of Labour has:

1. Implemented the **Mixed Status Family Legislation** which addressed the longstanding discrepancy where some members of the same family were Bermudian, but others were not.
2. Removed the requirement for an **Affidavit of Domicile** for children born to Bermudian parents while overseas, making it easier for these children to obtain Bermudian Status.
3. **Amended the eligibility requirement for Permanent Resident's Certificates** enabling individuals to be granted Permanent Resident's Certificates if they: have resided in Bermuda for 20 or more years; are non-Bermudian parents of children with Bermudian Status who have resided in Bermuda for 15 or more years; and if they are children of 2nd Generation Permanent Resident's Certificate holders.

IV. PROVIDED OPPORTUNITIES FOR JOBSEEKERS TO ACHIEVE PERSONAL SATISFACTION

Madame President;

Persons who are satisfied with their growth tend to achieve higher productivity in the workplace. To provide a sound foundation for those seeking employment or re-employment the Ministry of Labour has:

1. **Implemented the Personal Employment Plan** initiative designed to help financial assistance recipients to secure employment. This is a joint initiative between the Department of Financial Assistance and the Department of Workforce Development.
2. **Implemented Phase One of the two-phase National Re-employment Strategy** aimed at reducing unemployment. Phase One included the following education, training, and employment services to help individuals secure employment:
 - Administered various face-to-face, on-the-job, online, virtual learning, webinars, internships, apprenticeships and trainee programmes in which over six hundred and fifty (650) persons participated;
 - Secured part-time or full-time employment for seventy (70) individuals as a result of these training initiatives; and
 - Facilitated employment for seven hundred and forty-seven (747) unemployed Bermudians through the Department of

Workforce Development's Bermuda Job Board referral process.

3. **Implemented the Graduate Training Program** which provided paid internships and career readiness training ~~to~~ for two cohorts of graduates: 15 in the first cohort and 10 in the second. This program will assist young Bermudians in gaining work experience often needed to fully enter the workforce.
4. **Provided a total of \$350,000 in Scholarships** to support forty-three (43) Bermudians to attend local educational programmes and overseas tertiary education. This demonstrates the importance of education and this Government's commitment to ensuring Bermuda's young people complete their respective course of study.
5. **Continued the College Summer Jobs Programme** with 75 participants and the **High School Jobs programme** with 52 participants. This demonstrates this Government's commitment to providing job opportunities for our young people while they continue to pursue their educational goals.

V. PRESERVED JOBS AND IMPLEMENTED LAWS THAT SUPPORT PROGRESS IN THE WORKPLACE

Madame President;

Preserving jobs and implementing progressive labour laws require collaboration between government and the private sector. While building a foundation of trust to bolster worker security, the Ministry of Labour has:

1. Legislated the Trade Union and Labour Relations

(Consolidation) Act 2021 which further strengthen the Employment Act and ensures workers' rights are protected in the workplace. Additional rights include the following:

- A requirement for employers to provide a **written policy against bullying and sexual harassment in the workplace** and advise how it can be accessed;
- A requirement for employers to provide employees with a **midway performance review** during their probationary period to identify areas for improvement;
- **Expanded Bereavement Leave** to include grandparents, great-grandparents, grandchildren and greatgrandchildren;

- A requirement for employers to **pay any wages and other remuneration or benefits owed** to the employee upon termination within seven days or at the next interval that the employee would have been paid; and
 - A requirement for employers to provide their employees with a **meal break of at least 30 minutes** after the employee has worked continuously for five (5) hours.
2. Placed a **moratorium for new work permits** on 41 additional occupations (for a total of 53) which began in November 2020 and extended to January 2022. This enabled us to create more opportunities in the local job market for Bermudians.
 3. **Enhanced scrutiny of work permit applications** to ensure that capable and qualified Bermudians were not passed over for job opportunities.

Madame President;

The cumulative effect of the above policies and initiatives have enabled Bermuda to be better positioned to overcome the many challenges that lay before us. As we build upon these initiatives we look forward to

strengthening Bermuda further throughout the upcoming year when we will take further steps to continue to build a better Bermuda for all.

Thank you Madame President.