



Ministerial Statement
To The House of Assembly

By

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Minister of Education

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First Cohort of College Promise Graduates 2023

Friday, July 14, 2023

Mr Speaker,

Today I rise to inform Honourable Colleagues and the people of Bermuda about the successes to date of the College Promise Programme.

Mr. Speaker,

In 2020, the Government of Bermuda made a “Promise” to students of the Bermuda Public School System that those students graduating with a 3.0 GPA or above would be able to attend Bermuda College tuition-free, thus introducing the College Promise Programme.

However, I would like first to go back to 2017. Shortly after that year’s election, the Government began implementing the short-term objectives for education that were identified in the PLP 2017 Platform to help our citizens achieve their educational aspirations by:

1. Increasing funding for scholarships so that students in public schools have more opportunities to secure higher education, and
2. Increasing accessibility to Bermuda College by providing financial support to students in need.

I began today by reminding Members of our short-term objectives for education because our delivery has been decisive and has resulted in real-world positive outcomes – not only enjoyed by Bermudians who have pursued higher education since 2017, but also by Bermuda College with an enriched student body, and of course by the Bermudian economy and society, by way of a better educated workforce and citizenry.

Mr Speaker,

Right away, beginning in August 2017, and every year since the Ministry of Education has provided a **\$300,000** grant to Bermuda College for student financial aid. Since then, 434 students have benefited from these additional financial aid funds, giving them greater access to higher education.

In addition, since 2017, the Government has progressively increased funding for Bermuda Government Scholarships, Awards, and Educational Grants. The present level is **\$1.95 million**, almost double the **\$1 million** available just before the current Government's election.

And then soon after, in 2020, under the ethos of continuing to support our students, we introduced College Promise in partnership with Bermuda College.

The College Promise Programme provides for senior school graduates from CedarBridge Academy and The Berkeley Institute to attend Bermuda College tuition-free for up to two years. This programme has been a transformative initiative, empowering public school students to pursue higher education without the burden of tuition fees, and the cost of overseas travel and accommodation.

Mr Speaker,

To put the impact of programs such as the College Promise Programme in perspective, I would like to use the example of one such student. This student indicated on their RSVP to the reception that they planned to continue their

education at St. Francis Xavier University in Nova Scotia, Canada. Due to the articulation agreement between Bermuda College and St. Francis Xavier University, all of their Bermuda College credits were accepted. They have been accepted into the third year of the Bachelor of Arts program in Mathematics (Concentration in Actuarial Science).

The annual tuition alone at St. Francis Xavier University is around **\$23,000 per year**, with Room and Board listed starting at around **\$11,000 per year**. As a result of the College Promise Programme, attending Bermuda College and obtaining a degree tuition-free has saved this student and their family approximately **\$68,000** in schools fees they would have paid if they had gone overseas directly after graduating.

Mr Speaker,

As the Minister of Education, I often have the pleasure of speaking to young people, their parents, and extended family to understand how they are experiencing education and the challenges they may be overcoming, in addition to their growth and success.

Late last month, I met the very first young Bermuda College graduates whose aspirations for post-secondary education were fulfilled through the College Promise Programme. I held a reception in their honour to recognise and acknowledge their growth, dedication and perseverance throughout their time at Bermuda College. They pushed the boundaries of their potential and embraced the transformative power of education.

The reception was held to mark a significant milestone of the first cohort of graduates from Bermuda College since the inception of the College Promise Programme.

Their achievements serve as a testament to the vision and benefits of this initiative. All involved have taken immense pride in its role in shaping the educational journey of recent young Bermudian graduates.

Their unique perspectives, skills and experiences will help to shape the future of Bermuda. I have no doubt that they will be future leaders and change-makers of our society, and make invaluable contributions to our Island-home and the world.

Mr Speaker,

I wish to publically acknowledge and thank Bermuda College's President, Dr. Duranda Greene and Vice President, Dr. Phyllis Curtis-Tweed and the Bermuda College team for their contribution to the success of this programme.

Mr Speaker,

The Government is steadfast in its support of students, and will continue to invest in the inaugural graduates of the College Promise Programme. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that each of the thirteen graduating students will receive up to **\$7,500** for additional further education beyond their Bermuda College degrees. These funds, budgeted already for the College Promise Programme, will not disqualify students from applying for any other Scholarships or Awards and demonstrate this Government's ability to think outside the box and do whatever it can to assist our students in reaching their potential.

Mr Speaker,

At the celebratory reception, I encouraged each graduate to embrace the future with open arms, pursue their passions without fear, and never lose sight of the transformative power of education. I wished them all the best in their upcoming endeavours, and I eagerly wait to see what other remarkable contributions they will make to our beloved Bermuda. In Closing, on behalf of the Government of Bermuda, I invite honourable colleagues and the listening public to join me as I

extend my warmest congratulations again to these College Promise Programme Graduates.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**