



Ministerial Statement

by:

The Hon. Jason P. Hayward, JP, MP

Minister for the Ministry of Economy and Labour

Summer Employment Programme 2026:

**Building Pathways Through Bermuda's Youth Employment
Strategy**

Friday, 25 September 2026

Mr. Speaker,

I rise today to inform this Honorable House of the work undertaken through the 2026 Summer Employment Programme and its contribution to Bermuda's Youth Employment Strategy.

The Summer Employment Programme is more than a source of temporary employment during the summer months. It is a structured bridge between post-secondary education and the workplace, enabling Bermudian college and university students to apply their academic learning, gain relevant experience, build professional networks and make more informed decisions about their future careers.

In this way, the programme advances the Youth Employment Strategy's commitment to expanding career support, increasing access to meaningful

work experience and strengthening the transition from education into sustainable employment.

Mr. Speaker,

In 2026, the Department of Workforce Development placed 102 college and university students through the Summer Employment Programme. Together with the 72 high school students who participated in the Summer Internship Programme, 174 young Bermudians gained meaningful exposure to the workplace this summer.

Their placements were made possible through collaboration with Government ministries and departments, public authorities, educational institutions and private-sector employers.

Mr. Speaker,

I want to thank each participating organization for providing our young people with meaningful opportunities to gain workplace experience, develop their skills, explore career pathways and build professional relationships, while also contributing to the development of the future Bermudian workforce.

The value of that partnership extends well beyond a single summer. Employers help students understand workplace expectations, develop technical and transferable skills, explore career pathways and establish professional relationships that can support their long-term success. At the same time, employers gain early access to emerging Bermudian talent and an opportunity to help shape the workforce they will need in the years ahead.

Mr. Speaker,

The Department's work begins well before a student reports for duty. The Career Development Team engages with employers, assesses applications, matches students with suitable opportunities and coordinates the administrative requirements necessary to support each placement. Throughout the programme, the Department remains engaged with both students and employers, providing career guidance, monitoring placements and supporting students' professional development.

Wherever possible, placements should align with a student's field of study and career interests while also meeting a genuine workplace need. This helps transform a summer job into a meaningful workforce development opportunity, one that is intentional, supported and connected to a longer-term career pathway.

Mr. Speaker,

Meaningful work experience must be supported by meaningful preparation. This year's orientation programme, delivered under the theme "Level Up: From Participant to Professional," prepared students for the workplace by focusing on professionalism, communication, teamwork, ethics, accountability, personal branding, financial literacy, career planning and the development of a growth mindset.

Students also benefited from continued career-development activities during the programme, including career coaching, employability training and participation in the National Youth Conference. Through these opportunities, students were able to strengthened their leadership, civic engagement, public speaking, innovation, media communication and problem-solving skills.

The Department further introduced learning opportunities in artificial intelligence for personal and professional productivity, workplace communication, emotional intelligence and resilience. These

competencies are increasingly important as technology reshapes the nature of work and employers place greater value on adaptability, sound judgement, initiative and effective collaboration.

Mr. Speaker,

A defining feature of this year's programme was Future Forward, a conversation with myself as the Minister, hosted at the Bermuda College. This interactive forum gave Summer Employment Programme students an opportunity to speak directly and candidly about Bermuda's workforce, economy and the issues influencing their decisions concerning education, employment and life in Bermuda.

The forum was guided by a simple but important message: "Your voice matters. Your ideas matter. Your future matters." The discussions explored employment opportunities, scholarships and education, entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, affordable housing, the cost of living and the skills required for future employment. Students spoke about their aspirations, the barriers they face as they prepare to enter the workforce as well as the conditions that would encourage them to return to Bermuda after completing school or to remain here and build their careers.

The opening conversation was facilitated by Callahj Simons, a former Bermuda College Student Government President, youth advocate and proud product of Bermuda's public school system. Her leadership helped establish an open and thoughtful exchange before the wider student audience was invited to participate.

Mr. Speaker,

I commend the students who approached their placements with professionalism, curiosity and ambition. I thank their parents and

guardians, the participating employers, and our educational and community partners for supporting their development.

I also recognize the management and staff of the Department of Workforce Development, particularly the Career Development Team, whose careful planning, coordination and continued support made the 2026 Summer Employment Programme possible.

When we invest in the development of our young people, we strengthen the resilience of our workforce, the competitiveness of our economy and the future of Bermuda.

This Government will continue working to ensure that young Bermudians have access not only to summer employment, but also to the experience, guidance, professional networks and pathways needed to progress into meaningful and sustainable careers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.