



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

To The House of Assembly

By

The Hon. Jason Hayward, JP, MP

Minister of Economy & Labour

Supporting Bermudian Workers

7 November 2025

Mr Speaker,

In March of 2024 I stood before this Honourable House to lay the Position Paper entitled “Retaining the Local Workforce”. The Paper highlighted the demographic challenges that will negatively impact the Bermudian workforce as a result of declining birth rates and an ageing population. The Paper explained that Bermuda, like many other ageing economies, will experience labour shortages and skill gaps in the coming years.

Mr Speaker,

The Ministry of Economy and Labour recently released the 2025 Job Market Employment Briefs and the data indicated there was an increase of 585 jobs between 2023 and 2024 of which only 18 or 0.1% were filled by Bermudians.

The Bermudian job numbers illustrate the labour force problem explained in the 2024 Position Paper.

Mr Speaker,

The problem we are facing is clear: new Bermudians entering the workforce are simply replacing those who are retiring. For example, if 400 Bermudians retired from the workforce in 2024, according to the jobs number it means that 418 new Bermudians entered the workforce in 2024, which would reflect only 18 new Bermudian jobs created. The impact of our population's demographic profile on our Bermudian job numbers cannot be over-emphasised.

Mr Speaker,

The Government is committed to making sure that Bermudians are provided with every opportunity to equip themselves with the knowledge and requisite skills needed so that they can have a fair shot when competing for jobs. As a government we want to see more and better opportunities for Bermudians.

The Government has been unwavering in our commitment to implement policies that expand the rights of Bermudian workers and ensure that Bermudians are protected in the workplace.

Mr Speaker,

This Government has a proud track record of expanding labour protections. The Government has worked diligently to strengthen workers' rights and protection such as:

- implemented a Minimum Hourly Wage Rate of \$16.40,

- ensured all employers have a policy against workplace bullying and harassment,
- increased compensation for workplace injury,
- increased maternity leave,
- introduced paternity leave as a right,
- ensured all employees get meal breaks,
- published independent contractor guidance, and,
- protected employee tips and other gratuities.

However, **Mr Speaker**, it was acknowledged that more work was needed to strengthen labour policies, and their enforcement, to ensure the rights of Bermudian workers are protected.

Thus, in the 2024 Position Paper, the Government committed to provide further support to Bermudians in the workforce and I am pleased to report that significant progress has been made.

Mr Speaker,

- The Government committed to and delivered on our commitment to produce guidelines that clarify how the minimum hourly wage will progress and has increased the minimum hourly wage rate to \$17.13.
- The Government committed to and delivered on our promise to increase allowable severance pay by increasing the maximum payout from 26 to 32 weeks for long serving employees.

- The Government committed to and delivered on our promise to Amend the work permit policy to ensure that Bermudian workers are protected from being first out during layoffs when there are work permit holders in similar positions.
- The Government committed to and delivered on our promise to amend the work permit policy to ensure that there is a hiring hierarchy which places Bermudians first amongst all other groups.
- The Government committed to and delivered on our promise to amend the work permit policy to ensure that all work permit holders have proficiency in the English language.
- The Government committed to and delivered on our promise to continue to revise closed and restricted job categories. The Ministry of Economy and Labour will also host industry specific employee meetings to get a better understanding of current workplace conditions to better shape future policies.

In addition, **Mr Speaker,**

- the Government is partnering with the Unions on the creation of a campaign supporting collective bargaining and union organizing;
- the Government has developed a policy which is under review by the Labour Advisory Council to advance pay transparency provisions; and the LAC is also reviewing options to strengthen the rights of the Employment and

Labour Tribunal to better support workers in receiving their awards; and

- the Government will be issuing guidelines to employers to encourage the continuation of work for workers over 65 years of age.

Mr Speaker,

These commitments and ongoing initiatives demonstrate the Government's unwavering dedication to protecting Bermudian workers and strengthening the labour market. By advancing fair employment practices, supporting union efforts, and ensuring equitable treatment for all employees, we are laying the foundation for a more just and prosperous future. Our focus remains on fostering an inclusive workforce where every Bermudian has the opportunity to thrive, and we will continue working collaboratively to address emerging challenges and uphold the rights of all workers.

Thank you, **Mr Speaker.**