

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly  
10th April 2014**

**By the Honourable Tara Rivers, JP MLA**

**Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs**

**National Workforce Development Agency**

**10<sup>th</sup> April 2014**



MINISTRY OF  
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT  
& GENDER AFFAIRS  
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Madame Speaker, I wish to update this Honourable house as to the work being done to address the challenge of unemployment.

Through the work of the National Workforce Development Agency (“NWDA”) this Government is working to prepare and protect Caymanians so they can partake in the economic opportunities that exist today in, and those being attracted to, the Cayman Islands. Over the past several months, since taking office in mid 2013, my Ministry has been engaged in a review of the work undertaken by the NWDA with a view to making the necessary changes that will ensure that this agency can fulfill its vision of being a “valued partner and facilitator in the training, development and employment of Caymanians”.

Through a review of the work of the NWDA Employment Services Unit it was noted that a strong collaborative relationship with the Immigration Department and its Boards is crucial to ensuring that Caymanians have a fair and equal opportunity in the recruitment process. During this review and in discussion with the Immigration Department it was further noted that the Immigration Department and its Boards rely heavily upon the NWDA Employment Services Unit to provide the necessary information to make informed decisions regarding the granting of work permits.

In response, my Ministry with the support of the Computer Services Department set out to expand the NWDA database to include an Immigration Interface which will ensure that that Immigration Department and its Boards have the information required in a timely manner to make informed decisions. The delivery of such a system was a major campaign promise and is absolutely essential to enhance the collaboration, the efficiency and the effectiveness in the way these two agencies – the NWDA and the Immigration Department – interact with one another.

I am happy to report that on February 25<sup>th</sup> of this year my Ministry launched the NWDA – Immigration database interface. Through a two hour unveiling and training session members of the Grand Cayman Immigration Department were introduced to and trained on the use of the new interface. A subsequent meeting was held with members of the Grand Cayman Immigration Department on April 1<sup>st</sup> where they shared feedback on the use of the interface. That feedback has resulted in some adjustments to the interface and changes to departmental procedures as we endeavour to ensure that we have a system that is fit for purpose. We anticipate another meeting with members of the Grand Cayman Immigration Department in another 3 or 4 weeks to gather some more feedback which will inform additional “tweaks” to the system.

We are very happy and encouraged that the Immigration Department has been willing to engage in this level of collaboration as it has facilitated the development of a system that meets the needs of all involved and has the necessary “buy-in” of those it was designed to support. In addition to the meetings which have taken place on Grand Cayman, on March 20<sup>th</sup> representatives of the NWDA and my Ministry met with the Deputy District Commissioner and representatives of the Cayman Brac and Little Cayman Immigration Department to introduce them to the Immigration interface. Those present stated that they could see the value of this interface and have committed to utilizing it as a tool in the work permit process utilized here in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman.

Madame Speaker, I would like to note that in a recent press release the Chief Immigration Officer stated that she was happy with the collaboration between her department and the NWDA. She said that the online interface will make for a significant positive change in the way Immigration and the NWDA work with each other and will increase the transparency of the work permit process. She, too, encouraged all employers and job seekers to take advantage of this system.

This interface, which is a component of the larger NWDA database, is designed to facilitate significant positive change in the way Immigration and NWDA work with each other and is:

- facilitating transparency in the work permit process;
- providing an efficient and effective way for employers to communicate efforts to hire a suitably qualified Caymanians; and
- providing an effective and efficient way for the NWDA to provide information to the Immigration Department and its Boards that will allow for informed decisions to be made by them when processing work permit applications.

Madame Speaker, I would like to briefly share the steps involve in this new process as I feel that this will give a very valuable picture of the process that has been established under this Government's leadership:

1. Employer registers a job with the NWDA.
2. NWDA system runs a query to identify job seeking clients who broadly meet the requirements of the post.
3. NWDA Employment Services Officer reviews the matches for appropriateness and with authorization from job seekers, refer candidates that are a reasonable fit for the post.
4. NWDA Job Seeking Clients are able to view job posts and have the option to self-refer.
5. Employer Clients receive notification of matches for persons who have self-referred or who have been referred by the NWDA.
6. The Employer Client is responsible for reviewing all candidates and determining their suitability.

7. The Employer Client is provided with a section on the database where they can record the outcome of each referral.
8. If the Employer Client does not select a Caymanian and chooses to apply for a work permit the Immigration Department and its Boards will be able to pull up the referral record and view the list of persons that were referred or self-referred, the rationale for the referral and the reasons the company gave to explain why no suitable applicant was found.

This process will ensure that the Immigration Department and its Boards are aware of every person that was referred or self-referred and the outcome of the recruitment process. It is important to note that there is no legislation that mandates Employer's to register their companies with the NWDA or post available jobs with the NWDA. While this interface facilitates transparency in the work permit process it only accomplishes this for jobs that are posted with the NWDA where persons have applied for the post through the NWDA.

What my Ministry has done is to create a valuable and critically important service and we are encouraging employers and job seekers to utilize it in the process of recruitment and job seeking. The approach right now is to create something that is useful to job seekers and employers, and we are inviting feedback as we further develop the system to ensure that it is fit for purpose.

In addition to the work being undertaken on the NWDA database, my Ministry has also been involved in the expansion of services to job seeking clients through our district outreach programme. The Training and Development Unit of the NWDA has partnered with Library Services to deliver NWDA employment services at the District public library branches on a monthly basis. Through this opportunity Caymanians can meet with a representative of the NWDA at their district library for assistance with any activity related to job seeking including registering with the NWDA, searching for jobs on the online portal, self-referring for jobs, resume writing, and interview preparation.

In response to feedback from employers and job seekers we note that one of the challenges our country faces is the discrepancy between the skills an employer desires and the level of skills present within a segment of our unemployed population. My Ministry recognizes that in order to address this challenge there needs to be a focus on training and development. In response, my Ministry is currently working on the intake and assessment process for job seekers who desire the support of an Employment Services Officer as they engage in job seeking activities. This is being designed as a comprehensive assessment that will include: psycho-social assessment, mental health screener, career assessment and an assessment of employability skills. This process will help to identify the level and type of support and services required to move the job seeker closer to the job market. We anticipate that the intake and assessment process will be implemented by the end of April 2014. To support the intake and

assessment process the Computer Services Department is building a professional development interface. This interface will be used to record the activities that the job seeker has committed to engage in as they address their respective barriers to employment. This interface will track the progress of job seekers and hold them accountable to engaging in the work necessary to address their respective barriers to employment. This interface will also facilitate the opportunity for online case management of individuals who are seeking support and services from multiple government agencies. It is anticipated that this interface will be launched at the end of April 2014.

Madame Speaker, there is much more that I could share regarding the work that is being undertaken by my Ministry as we work to address the challenge of unemployment. In the interest of time, I chose today to highlight some of the major projects that my Ministry has undertaken and has accomplished thus far as we work to ensure that the NWDA is positioned to fulfill its vision of being a “valued partner and facilitator in the training, development and employment of Caymanians”.

Madame Speaker, I thank you