

**Statement to the Legislative Assembly
3rd Meeting of the 2014/2015 Session**

By the Honourable Tara Rivers, JP, MLA

Minister of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs

Minimum Wage Advisory Committee's Public Consultation

24th October, 2014



MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT
& GENDER AFFAIRS
CAYMAN ISLANDS GOVERNMENT

Madam Speaker,

I would like to provide this honourable House with an update on the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee and their progress to date.

As you may recall the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) was established in June of this year as required by the Labour Law to provide recommendations to Cabinet on implementing a minimum wage in the Cayman Islands. The Committee is made up of twelve voting members, with equal representation of employers, employees and independent members.

The key objectives for this Minimum Wage exercise are to determine a wage regime which would help to: 1) address exploitation and providing real relief to the lowest paid workers; and 2) improve employment opportunities for Caymanians in relation to decreasing the demand for imported workers. The Committee has been asked to write their report to Cabinet from the perspective that a minimum wage will be introduced and the pros and cons associated with each price point considered, and to make a recommendation accordingly.

Initially the Committee hoped to complete their work by the 31st October, 2014 in advance of the initial February 2015 deadline set by Cabinet. However, due to the importance and breath of the topic and the need to include public consultation, the committee believed it required a reversion to the original deadline of 28th February 2015 in order to meet its objectives. The Committee has been meeting almost every week since its inception, with a total of 20 meetings to date, and has been working extremely hard at the task at hand.

You may also remember Madam Speaker that the Committee has secured a Technical Consultant who is the Senior Specialist, Employment and Labour Market Policies at the International Labour Organisation. Mr. Reynold Simons has been on island this week meeting with the Committee and presenting them with his analysis of the data he received from the Cayman Islands Economics and Statistics Office.

The public consultation phase of the Committee's process has now started with the official launch held on 16th October, 2014. The first phase of the Committee's public consultation will run from this date until Sunday 30th November, 2014. There will also be district meetings scheduled in January 2015 to round out the public consultation phase.

There are four ways in which the Committee is gathering information in the public consultation process:

1. Completed Surveys
2. Focus Group Meetings
3. District Meetings
4. Accepting written submissions

There are five surveys, each aimed at a particular sector of the population. The surveys will help the Committee gather important additional quantitative and qualitative information that isn't readily available from the data collected by the Economics and Statistics Office. The five surveys are for:

- Household employers – those who employ domestic helpers, nannies, groundskeepers, gardeners, etc. in their homes.
- Household employees – those who are employed as domestic helpers, nannies, groundkeepers, gardeners, etc. in a person's home.
- Business employers – those who own a private sector business or represent the owner such as HR managers, Directors, Partners, General Managers, etc.
- Business employees – those who are employed in the private sector, particularly in industries that have been identified as having lower-paid employees.
- The general public, specifically students, retirees, civil servants and the unemployed.

To access the surveys online members of the public can go to: www.education.gov.ky/minimumwage Surveys will be removed from the website on 1st December.

During the month of November, the representatives from the Economics and Statistics Office will also be contacting businesses and households on all three islands to encourage the surveys to be completed and so that a recognisable sample size is obtained.

In addition to Town Hall Meetings that will be scheduled early in the New Year, the committee will conduct three focus group meetings to hopefully increase the chances of getting qualitative data from purposeful discussions. The focus groups are as follows:

- Cayman Brac on Saturday 25th October (tomorrow) at the Layman Scott High School hall. Two hour sessions, one in the morning (10:00am-12:00pm) for employers (household and business) and one in the afternoon (1:00-3:00pm) for employees (also household and business) and unemployed Caymanians.
- Grand Cayman session on Thursday, 30th October at 6:00pm at the Family Life Centre. Two hour session in the evening for youth (persons aged 17-24 years), students, household employees, Saturday Sabbath worshippers and unemployed Caymanians.
- Grand Cayman session on Saturday 1st November at the Family Life Centre. This session will have the same format as the Cayman Brac focus groups on 25th October.

Members of the public who wish to take part in the focus groups are asked to contact the committee at minimumwage@gov.ky or by calling 244-3151. Copies of the surveys will also be available at the public libraries. Written submissions on the topic are also accepted by sending letters to the Ministry of Education, Employment and Gender Affairs' mailing address.

The Committee is leading the public consultation as the feedback received will assist in forming their recommendations in their report to Cabinet. I am giving my full support to the Minimum Wage Advisory Committee's efforts, and I encourage the public to take part, especially with filling out the relevant surveys and attending focus group meetings, as this topic is one of national importance that will affect every resident of the Cayman Islands.

Thank you.