



Ministerial Statement
Bermuda Educators Council (Exemption Order) 2011
By
The Honourable Dame Jennifer Smith, DBE, JP, DHumL, MP
Minister of Education
Friday 18 November 2011

Mr. Speaker, on the 4th of November, eagle-eyed Members may have noticed in the Official Gazette an item entitled **the Bermuda Educators Council (Exemption Order) 2011**.

Section 6 of the Bermuda Educators Council Act 2002 establishes an Exemption Committee. The Exemption Committee advises the Minister on proposals for exemption. The present Committee is chaired by the Honourable Dale Butler JP, MP and includes Mrs. Helle Patterson, Ms. Sonia Grant, Mrs. Diana Dill and Ms. Michelle Squire.

I am thankful to the members of this Committee for the advice and recommendations they have made regarding the exemption requests that were received.

The Committee met as needed to consider proposals for exemptions, many of which arose as a result of the Ministry of Education crackdown on individuals who were either uncertified or unqualified.

The Bermuda Educators Council also reported that some persons, who were previously non-compliant with the Act, produced their credentials and submitted them to the BEC as a direct result of the actions the Ministry took in June.

Mr. Speaker, Section 5(1) of the Bermuda Educators Council Act 2002 provides that, **“the Minister acting on the advice of the Exemption Committee, on being satisfied that there is a need in schools in Bermuda for persons who possess knowledge of, and skills in, particular subjects taught at schools to exempt a specified person; or persons falling within specified classes who possess knowledge and skills.”**

The intent of the Act is to ensure that when there are shortages of staff in schools and/or when there are legitimate reasons, the Minister may provide exemptions in specified circumstances or subject to conditions to an individual or group of persons.

Therefore, in hard to fill subject areas, the Minister, based on a recommendation from the Exemption Committee, may exempt an individual in order that they might fulfill a need in our schools.

Whilst we must protect our students and also consider the integrity of the teaching profession, we must also ensure that we are able to ensure instruction when we are unable to fulfill a position with a fully qualified individual. Therefore, an exemption might also include conditions that must be met or establish a time limit by which the individual will no longer be allowed to continue in the school system.

Mr. Speaker, the gazetting of this information creates a layer of accountability that ensures that these persons are known widely and lessens the possibility of them being used outside of the area for which they are approved and/or qualified.

This is a positive step forward regarding our focus on teaching and learning. Only by ensuring that we have qualified and certified staff in our schools can we raise student performance.

Proposed amendments to the Bermuda Educators Council Act, which were mentioned in the Speech from the Throne, will also strengthen our teaching profession and ensure that our teachers meet international standards.

The frontline of our focus on teaching and learning is growing the capacity of our principals and raising the quality of our teachers who are integral to the success of our students.

Thank you.