



Ministerial Statement

Relocation of Lagoon Park Preschool

Minister of Education

The Honourable Dame Jennifer Smith DBE, JP, DHumL, MP

Friday 08 June 2012

Mr. Speaker,

Almost one year ago - on June 24, 2011 - I rose to inform Honourable Members of the first step in a plan to make life easier for parents, ensure maximum use of school facilities, and follow the policy set by Government concerning the housing of its government departments.

Last year **Mr. Speaker**, that step was the relocation of Lyceum Preschool from rented premises on Wilkinson Avenue to a government-owned site at Francis Patton Primary School.

Today, I am pleased to announce the second step in that process.

This step will see Lagoon Park Preschool move out of rented accommodation on Ireland Island to a Government owned site at Somerset Primary School.

The move comes after consultation with the Principal and Administrator of the two facilities and after ensuring that parental and teacher concerns were heard and considered.

Mr. Speaker, parents have advised that this move will make for easier delivery and pick-up of their children, as they will no longer have to travel to Ireland Island before heading east to work.

This move also mirrors the action of a previous administration who, rather than close a school, added to the number of public preschool places by moving Southamton Preschool to a government-owned building next door to Dalton E. Tucker Primary School.

Mr. Speaker, Lagoon Park Preschool will retain its name and its independence under the administration of Mrs. Sherri Bucci. Somerset Primary School will remain under the leadership of Mr. O'Brien Osborne. While there are logistical details to be worked out, I am certain that there will be increased opportunities for interaction between the two schools.

Mr. Speaker, the matter of school closures continues to arise from time to time, I have to note that one of the reasons for not seeing this as a viable option at this time is because birth rates fluctuate and when there is lowered enrollment, we want to first look at what opportunities for improvement this offers. As I have stated previously, we intend to make full utilisation of all educational resources - be they human or structural.

Mr. Speaker, Members should be interested to learn that current rent for Lagoon Park Preschool is **one hundred and nine thousand, three hundred and ten dollars** annually. So while there are costs associated with the relocation, in the long-term there will be substantial savings.

Work to ensure that the buildings and areas are suitable for the students will take place over the summer and I would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Bermuda Union of Teachers (BUT) who provided feedback from their members who had been involved in the Lyceum Preschool move last year. This information helped to guide decisions on achieving the smoothest transition possible.

Mr. Speaker, to repeat, the relocation of Lagoon Park Preschool accomplishes the following:

1. Provides parents of children of different ages (one child in preschool and another in primary school), the benefit of having both children in one location.
2. Is in keeping with the policy to house government entities in government facilities wherever possible;
3. Continues a plan begun with the re-location of Southampton Preschool next to Dalton E. Tucker Primary School and Lyceum Preschool next to the Francis Patton Primary School; and finally....
4. Provides us with a savings of **one hundred and nine thousand, three hundred and ten dollars** per year.

Mr. Speaker, I must also publicly thank the principal of the Somerset Primary School, Mr. O'Brien Osborne, the Acting Preschool Administrator of Lagoon Park Preschool, Mrs. Cosette Durrant and the substantive Administrator Mrs. Sherri Bucci – all of whom have embraced this initiative.

Whilst acknowledging that with change comes challenges, they also visualise the benefits that can result for both entities.

Thank you.